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QUICK TRUTHS  
IN QUAINI TEXTS

Second Series



# QUICK TRUTHS IN QUAIN'T TEXTS

Second Series

By

ROBERT STUART MACARTHUR

Minister of Calvary Baptist Church, New York, since  
May 15, 1870

*Get but the truth once uttered, and 'tis like  
A star new-born that drops into its place,  
And which, once circling in its placid round,  
Not all the tumult of the earth can shake.*

—LOWELL



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## PREFACE

A FEW years ago the author published a volume entitled, "Quick Truths in Quaint Texts." The present volume is, therefore, the second series of sermons with the same general title. These sermons were preached on consecutive Sunday evenings in the course of the author's regular ministry, during the past few months. There is an advantage in the line of freshness in the selection of unusual texts as the setting of familiar truths. An earnest effort was made to give the dominant thought of the texts in brief and uniform titles; and it is believed that the attempt has been, at least, partially successful. These sermons, when preached, were listened to by large audiences; it is hoped that, thus published, they will be read by audiences still larger. The author's prayer is that they may help men and so may honor God.

R. S. MACARTHUR.

CALVARY STUDY, NEW YORK.



# QUICK TRUTHS IN QUAIN'T TEXTS

## I

### THE SONGFUL JEHOVAH

*Text: He will joy over thee with singing.—Zeph. 3: 17.*

THE Lord Jehovah singing! Is this picture of the Almighty startling? Does it in any sense seem discordant to the idea of God as “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders”? Does it seem, in any degree, to lessen our reverence for him who is “the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy”? Is there any dissonancy of ideas between this conception of Jehovah and the description of him as given in Isaiah, where he is represented as “sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the

posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke”?

Is there, again it is asked, anything discordant between the loftiest conception of God as the high and holy One, and the description of God as singing? Is not song as holy as any other form of expression? Could God appear more sublimely and divinely than he is presented in this text? To Isaiah’s rapt vision, in the passage already quoted, heaven’s lofty temple was open and the glory of Jehovah filled its courts, and almost broke down the trembling posts of the door. The song of the angels which echoed over the plains of Bethlehem, announcing that the King had come, gave the world a still fuller example of celestial music. But we rise to a much loftier height when we hear the great God singing a song of joy over his redeemed and beloved children. This is the sublimest conception that ever challenged human thought. Dare we rise to the supernal heights of the truth here taught? Is it said that the language is figurative? Without doubt, the language is figurative, but the figure must be in harmony with the fact which underlies the figure. Indeed, the fact must be vastly greater than the figure; it is, therefore, a factual figure, and not a figurative fact.

Dare one with becoming reverence imagine that this song had been so sung, in accordance with modern scientific discovery, that it could be pro-

duced by a phonograph? The idea is peculiarly startling; and, in the thought of some, it may even suggest irreverence. Oh, that the world of music had the score of the solo and the chorus of the celestial choir as the angels chanted the sublime Song of the Nativity! But more marvelous still would be the score of the song sung by the Lord Jehovah rejoicing over his beloved. What would not Handel and Haydn, Mozart and Mendelssohn give for that score? Could Professor Bowman, the leader of our fine quartet and our grand chorus, reproduce it on any earthly organ even in his most ecstatic musical moments? Doubtless, to the ear of God, the whole universe is a sublime oratorio; it has its airs, its recitatives, its duets, its trios, and its choruses. Dare we think of the Lord Jehovah as the leader of a chorus of saints and seraphs, of angels and archangels, chanting sublime and divine symphonies? Can we reverently imagine sun and moon, stars of light, dragons and deeps, fire and hail, mountains and hills, beasts and all cattle, judges, princes, and kings, as swelling the august and celestial chorus of the song sung by the Almighty?

#### THE CONTEXT.

We have reason to believe that Zephaniah wrote in the earlier part of the reign of Josiah. He predicts, in his first chapter, the utter desolation of Judea as a judgment for its neglect of God, and its

tendency to idolatry. He also earnestly rebukes the luxury of the princes and the violence of the people. In the second chapter he foretells the doom of Nineveh, and threatens with perpetual destruction Moab, Ammon, and other enemies of Judah. It seems certain that Zephaniah prophesied prior to the religious reformation under Josiah for, when he prophesied, remains of the Baal worship were still found in the land. In the third chapter he addresses Jerusalem, and severely reproves her for the cruelty of the princes, the treachery of the priests, and the viciousness of the people. He concludes the chapter with exhortations to joy, mingled with assurances of the manifestation of God's love in the restoration of his people. While Zephaniah's writing has not the sublime energy of Joel, nor the sustained majesty of Isaiah, it is still marked by religious fervor and rhetorical force. All through his book there are effective alternations of glowing promises and solemn warnings.

The picture given in the third chapter, of the city of Jerusalem, shows that the sin of the people was most grievous. Princes and priests, judges and prophets were all guilty of disobedience and impenitence. The hardness and shamelessness of the people proved that they deserved the severe judgment of Jehovah. They refused to receive instruction and heeded not the judgment of God on other nations. There was a remnant, however, among

the Jews that should be saved from the general calamity. There was a spiritual Israel that should enjoy the presence and protection of God, that should be delivered from all their foes, and that finally should be worthy of honor among all the nations.

#### THE TEXT.

God greatly desires to comfort his people; rebuke is his strange work. He will not always chide, neither will he keep his anger forever. He rejoices over his bride, so God rejoices over reproaches of his people, and in bringing back their captivity. The inspired writer strikes sweet notes as he approaches the verse from which the text is taken. He teaches us that the time is coming when Jerusalem shall not fear, and the day is near when Zion shall not faint in spirit, but shall be vigorous, courageous, and victorious in the destruction of all enemies. Truly sublime is the description of God in the text. We may well quote the entire verse: "The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing."

God is here presented under the name "Jehovah." This was the ineffable name of God among the Jews, they refusing, out of reverence, ever to pronounce it. Wherever it occurs, they substituted for it in reading, the word *Adonai*,

Lord, or the word *Elohim*, God. Probably its ancient pronunciation was *Yahveh*; its meaning was, He shall be, or, He is. It is similar in meaning to the title, I am, the person only being changed. The name denotes self-existence, immutability, and the infinite fulness of the Divine Being. The name sets forth God as eternally self-existent and the Author of all other existence. It is thus a pledge that he will fulfil all his promises. This name of power and hope gives cheer to the heaviest heart in the darkest hour.

The personal relationship of God is also beautifully emphasized, "thy God." Most comforting is the teaching in the Bible suggested by the personal pronouns regarding God's personal relation to his people. God graciously enters into relationship with every believing man and child. Every human soul needs the consciousness of ownership in God; every believing child of God can say with literal truth, "thou art my God." It would be much to be permitted to say, "the Lord is a shepherd"; it is vastly more joyous to say, "the Lord is my shepherd." God is here expressly designated by the prophet as "thy God." It is impossible to overstate the comfort which these words impart. We stand in a blessed covenant relation with God as a Redeemer and Father.

The next great truth taught in this text is the presence of God with his people; he is "in the midst" of his chosen people. As the sun is the



center of the universe, diffusing his light and heat to every part, so God is in the midst of his people as the source of light and life, and of peace, love, and joy. He will never leave nor forsake those who put their trust in him; nothing "shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." As Jehovah, he is the eternal and immutable One; and as Immanuel, he is God with us. But this text multiplies its blessed affirmations regarding God's relations to his children; he is not only Jehovah, not only a personal God, not only ever present as Immanuel, but he is also "mighty." He is the Gibbor, the prevailing One, the all-conquering Hero. In Isaiah 9:6, the Child that is born is called El Gibbor, the prevailing, almighty God. These are wonderful words; they mightily move our souls and greatly rejoice our hearts. Jesus Christ is Wonderful, Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah; he is the Man of God's right hand. All the resources of the universe are at his command. Even on the cross he was a King. Even his enemies affirmed his kingship in the inscriptions placed on that cross. The cross was his throne; he rules the world to-day because once he died for the world's sin, and rose again in triumph from the grave. With regal power on the cross, he dismissed his life, no one being able to take it from him; and with divine potency he took it again

himself and rose from the grave, king over death and hades. At his name "every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth and things under the earth, and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Our Christ is no weakling; he is the "Strong Son of God."

God, this text informs us, uses his mighty power for a practical end—"he will save"; he will employ his power for the redemption of his people; he will be Jesus, "for he shall save his people from their sins." This is the name given by the angel to the child of Mary. This is the true and spiritual character of Christ announced before his birth. Christ saves his people, not in but from their sins. Christ delivers from all the power and pollution of sin; he delivers all who believe from all the consequences of sin. He is not only able, but he is willing to save all who put their trust in him. We have here a sublime conception of God's ability and willingness to redeem the children of men. He marches forth "glorious in his apparel, traveling in the greatness of his strength." Who is this resistless conqueror? The divine record gives the joyous answer, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." He delivers us from ignorance and error, from trial and temptation, and from fear of death and the dominion of the grave. He brings us off more than conquerors over every spiritual foe.

We move forward a step in our exposition of this text; our attention is next called to God's joy over his people, "he will rejoice over thee with joy." This is a well-known Hebraistic form of speech; it is equivalent to saying that God rejoices, with exceeding great joy. This is a joy which words cannot adequately express nor thought fully conceive. God not only takes repentant and believing sinners into his favor, but he rejoices over them with inexpressible joy. As the bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so God rejoices over returning sinners. Christ taught us that there is joy in heaven among the angels when sinners repent; but the joy of the angels, we may be well assured, is only a faint reflection of the greater joy in the heart of God. God loves his church as his holy and blessed bride. The names of his people are graven on the palms of his hands. As often as he opens his hands, he beholds these names; as often as he closes his hands, he peculiarly protects his saints. Their names are not written on one hand alone, but on the palms of both hands, that his remembrance and protection of his saints may be doubly assured. These are most precious truths; they cannot be too often repeated nor too strongly emphasized. Christ said of his sheep, "I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand." No enemy by craft or violence shall reach the hand

of Christ to snatch therefrom even the weakest lamb of the flock. To make assurance doubly sure, Christ immediately adds, "My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." It is virtually said here that while Christ holds his sheep in his hand, the Father puts his almighty hand over the hand of Christ, and between these two hands even the feeblest lambs are absolutely safe. Neither man nor devil can ever reach those who are enfolded by these two divine hands.

We advance another step in our exposition, and learn that God "will rest in his love." God thus has a sweet complacency in his love for his children. This phase is sometimes rendered, "he will be silent because of his love." If this is the true translation, the idea is that God will not rebuke his people for their sins, but will find sweet repose in their new relation to him as their Redeemer. He will forgive their iniquities and cover their sins. God not only loves his saints, but he loves to love them as his redeemed people. There is still another shade of meaning in this clause of the text; the idea may be that God will be silent, will be dumb in the ecstatic joy which he has in his saints. Love is often most loving, when in the presence of those most loved it speaks no word. Silence is often more expressive than speech; a glance may be more voiceful than a word. The

silence of God may be as truly vocal as his loudest utterance. But if we take the translation of the clause as usually given, "he will rest in his love," the idea will be that God continues in his love without variation or shadow of turning; that nothing shall separate God from the objects of his love, and that he finds the utmost complacency, the most reposeful delight, in cherishing and manifesting his love for his saints. All these interpretations are inexpressibly precious. God's delight in his people is true and tender; it is both complete and abiding. God is their light and life, their hope and joy. He will complete in them the good work which he has begun. At times the way may be rough and dark, but soon the roughness will be removed and the darkness shall flee away. With Richard W. Gilder we can say:

Through love to light! Oh, wonderful the way  
That leads from darkness to the perfect day!

From darkness and from sorrow of the night,  
To morning that comes singing o'er the sea.  
Through love to light! Through light, O God! to thee,  
Who art the love of love, the eternal light of light.

### THE CLIMAX.

We now come to the climactic description of God in this remarkable verse—"he will joy over thee with singing." These various clauses show a pleonasm of speech in the effort to express the joy of God in his people; but no redundancy of

words, however great, can fully express that joy. God's people are his Hephzibah, for his highest delight is in showing them his loving favor; they are his Beulah, for to them he is divinely married, and he manifests his grace and glory in showing his love for his own.

This is the only passage in the Bible in which God is represented as singing. It, therefore, as was remarked in the opening of this discourse, excites our surprise, and evokes our praiseful wonder and our profound adoration. It is fitting that we should ask the question, What element is there in God's people which calls out God's songful joy? Does he not find cause for joy when he discovers in his people the restoration of his own partially effaced image? What is the ultimate outcome of all true religion? Is it not the restoration of the divine likeness in the human soul? Is not true godliness true godlikeness? In Jesus Christ, God gave us the incarnation of himself. Thus Christ said, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Christ came from the bosom of the Father to reveal him to men. He was "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person." Christ's first miracle was symbolic and prophetic of his entire earthly work. In that miracle he turned the water of earth into the wine of heaven. His earthly mission was to transform, to transmute, to celestialize, to divinize all things earthly. All his miracles were corrective of the

effects of sin and restorative of the condition of holiness. Etymologically wholeness and holiness are closely related. Christ came to make men whole by making them holy; to be wholly a man is to be a holy man. Christ came to make men spheres and not spheroids; to make them circles and not segments. This result was the lofty purpose of his miracles. Rightly considered, disease, sin, and death are abnormal. In Christ's miracles of power and grace he restores the normality of which sin robs the children of men. In one sense, his miracles were most natural when they were most supernatural; supernatural power is now necessary to restore what ought to be the natural condition of all human souls. Love and likeness to God ought not to be unnatural and abnormal, but utterly natural, and joyously and gloriously normal; in some sense love and likeness to God are blessedly normal.

Every human soul ought to be a mirror reflecting God's image. Salvation includes deliverance from the punishment of sin because it implies deliverance from the power, presence, and practice of sin. True religion binds us to God and makes us like God, and being like God, the law of moral gravitation will bring us into the eternal presence of God. His Spirit changes us from glory to glory until we possess his divine image. Thus the church as God's bride becomes unspeakably beautiful in herself and inexpressibly dear to her

heavenly Bridegroom; thus God will joy over her with singing.

This is the sublime picture of God and the church given us in the climax of this text. Words are utterly inadequate to describe this marvelous and matchless picture. The sublime song will not cease, the triumphant notes heard on the shore of the Red Sea, celebrating deliverance from Egyptian bondage, will blend with the song of the singers and harpers on "the sea of glass mingled with fire" as they sing the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." While we listen, a louder outburst greets our wondering ears. It is "The voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia; for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth."



# I

## THE HELPFUL HORNETS

*Text : Moreover, the Lord thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed.—Deut. 7 : 20.*

GOD is king in nature's vast domain. All the resources of the universe are under his control. Kings of the earth and all princes and judges must hear his voice and obey his will. He takes advantage of all local conditions in accomplishing his lofty purpose. If he is to destroy Sodom, he will avail himself of the slime-pits which abounded in that vicinity. Slime-pits are simply petroleum wells. God can employ these reservoirs of gas to destroy his foes. He can take advantage of local conditions in Egypt, magnifying existing pests until they become plagues that afflict and devastate the land. The miracle in such cases consists in the increase of existing evils, and in the timeliness of that increase so as to accomplish the divine purpose. In like manner God used hornets to drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite from before the people of Israel.

Some interpreters suppose that the word hornet

is used in this connection figuratively to describe the anxieties, perplexities, and various terrors which assailed the minds of the Canaanites in the presence of the Israelites. This supposition seems to be entirely groundless, there being no reason to doubt that actual hornets performed this service for Israel and for God. The Hebrew word here translated hornet is the one which usually describes that insect, according to the authority of most ancient versions. Bees, hornets, and similar insects were very numerous in Palestine; in parts of Palestine they are numerous to-day. In Josh. 15 : 33 we have the name Zoreah, indicating that hornets infested at least this particular place. The Talmudical writers give us numerous notices of the abundant existence of this creature. It is not in the slightest degree necessary to resort to the metaphorical sense of the word hornet. The use of local conditions to subserve God's purposes is a part of his plan in nearly all the miracles recorded in the Bible. The adaptation of ordinary means to higher ends, by intensification and time-liness in the use of these means, seems to be God's usual method of procedure. Instances are not uncommon of the deadliness of hornets even in our own day. A few years ago, while some railway men were making surveys for the purpose of throwing a bridge across the Nerbudda, a river rising in the northern part of the central provinces of India, they found, suspended in the

recesses of the white marble rocks, which rise almost perpendicularly on either side of the channel, numerous large hornets' nests, whose inmates were ready at once to descend upon man or beast who might disturb their repose. While the boats of these surveyors were passing up the river a cloud of hornets attacked the men with the utmost fury. To protect themselves the men jumped overboard; one of them becoming weary with swimming, clung to a marble block and was again attacked by hordes of these infuriated winged foes. For a little time he resisted the assaults of these countless hornets, but, being unable to drive them away, he finally threw himself into the river, preferring death by drowning to death by torture from his fierce foes. The other men were severely stung, but survived their terrible experience.

In natural history the hornet belongs to the species *Crabro*, and the genus *Vespa*. This is often a large and voracious insect; it is extremely strong for its size. Even the bees of one hive are sufficient to sting a thousand men to madness. How much worse would countless swarms of hornets be? No weapons nor armor of soldiers could prevail against such foes. A few thousand hornets would throw the best disciplined army in the world into utter confusion. Their attacks would be all the more terrible in Palestine, where the clothing of many of the people is both scanty and thin. All that is affirmed of these hornets

in the various Scriptures in which reference is made to their attacks on the Canaanites which remained in the land, is not only credible, but is entirely probable. The commentators, therefore, who endeavor to reduce these hornets to mere metaphors are endeavoring to remove from the narrative difficulties which they themselves have created.

#### THE SETTING OF THE TEXT.

The Israelites were evermore exposed to idolatry caused by association with the Canaanites. God gave frequent warnings against such fellowship; instruction was also given to destroy the graven images of the heathen in the land. The idols of these heathen were an abomination unto God; and God's blessing could rest upon his people only as they were loyal to his commands. Diseases were sure to come to their bodies and spiritual deadness to their souls if they compromised with the idolatry of the nations. Lest the Israelites should fear that they could never be victorious over their foes, God assures them that he is able to dispossess the Canaanites as he had overthrown the Egyptians. Having secured the greater victory, God could easily win the lesser triumph. He who had brought Israel out of Egypt and into Canaan, can easily drive out the Canaanites, so that his people could fully possess the land. The forces of the Israelites are indeed weak, compared

with the skill and training of the Canaanites; but God has auxiliary troops in swarms of infuriated hornets. He can as easily plague Canaanites with hornets as he punished Egyptians with flies. God's resources are unlimited. He can make grasshoppers as truly as archangels his messengers and the ministers of his wrath or love. God is neither on a journey nor asleep. Many men act to-day as if God were dead. Let all the nations know that he is seated in sublime majesty on his august throne. It is as true to-day as it ever was in the history of the race, that the people that will not obey God shall be cut off from being a nation, and that the highest glory of any people is to obey God and to win the fruits of righteous action within its own domain, and in relation to all the other nations of the earth. The Lord God sits and reigns above all the thrones and kingdoms of this earth. Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne; and it is equally true that mercy and truth shall ever go before his face. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance."

#### SPIRITUAL ANALOGIES.

Mr. Spurgeon—to whom I am indebted for valuable suggestions at this point—spiritualizes the story of the conquest of Canaan by the children of Israel, and, following John Bunyan, describes the town of Mansoul, when it had been taken by

Prince Immanuel. The Prince rode to the castle called the Heart, and took possession of it, and the whole city became his. There were, however, certain Diabolonians, followers of Diabolus, who never evacuated the town. They were seldom seen in the streets, never visited the markets, and did not occupy a house; but they hid most of the time in dens and caves. Occasionally some of them were impudent enough to hire themselves out as servants to the men of Mansoul under assumed names. Thus Mr. Covetousness became Mr. Prudent Thrifty, and there was Mr. Lasciviousness who adopted the name Mr. Harmless Mirth. These followers of Diabolus skulked about the town on dark days, and in the night, but hid in their dens, for the most part, during the daytime. They were always, however, the followers of the Black Prince. Although Mr. Pry Well and other watchful citizens might strive to discover their hiding-places, it was not possible always to ferret them out, and banish them as rebels from the city. They were the Hivites, Jebusites, and representatives of even other nations still lurking in Canaan, although Israel had the land in possession. In a similar manner, we are given to Christ body, soul, and spirit; we are his portion and his heritage. When he died for us, he purchased the right to the entire man. The new-born nature is to assert its power over our entire being. But old sins, like the Canaanites,

still remain in the land. We are disposed to deal leniently with them because they are a part of our old nature not yet fully subdued. Evil has no legal right in the soul of the believer, but often it has possession, and this is nine points of the law. The warfare must go on until all the followers of Diabolus are driven from the soul, and the whole nature is the possession of Prince Immanuel.

#### REMAINING CANAANITES.

Who are these Hivites and Jebusites that are the Canaanites still in the land? One of these enemies is Unbelief. This is a dangerous foe of our new King. The old rebel, Unbelief, must be driven out of the heart. Until this rebel is fully subdued, the soul can never enjoy perfect repose nor manifest supreme loyalty to Jesus as King. Unbelief disturbs our peace and dishonors our Master. Like the Hivites and Jebusites who hid themselves in caves and were not driven out until the hornets discovered them and drove them into the open, so unbelief and kindred sin hide themselves in the hearts of believers. We ought to welcome any form of hornet that will discover and banish these foes of God and man.

Another one of these dangerous lurkers in the recesses of the heart is Pride. Pride is a subtle sin. Pride is often manifested in proclaiming its absence and in calling itself humility. Satan makes men proud that they are not proud. The

proud heart becomes selfish, and, virtually, worships itself rather than God. Pride thrust Nebuchadnezzar out of the society of men and into fellowship with beasts. Pride drove Saul out of his kingdom, Adam out of paradise, and Lucifer out of heaven. We are told that Antisthenes exhibited himself at Athens in a tattered cloak that all might behold his humility. He really mistook pride for humility. Socrates readily discovered and promptly denounced the hypocrisy of this assumed humility. Pride is often more conspicuous when it assumes the garb of humility than when it wears resplendent robes. Plato discovered this fact when he entertained a few friends at a sumptuous table. Diogenes, in the spirit of cynic philosophy, coming in at the moment, said, "I trample upon the pride of Plato." Immediately Plato replied, "Yea, and thus you manifest the greater pride of Diogenes." Pride is never so prideful as when it asserts that it is prideless. Men who are proud of their humility are very Lucifers in the church of God and a greater peril often than the most arrogant. Saints that are proud of their goodness are the children of Satan. Those who indulge in the self-conceit of goodness, the Lord will humble in the mire. Those who claim perfection in their Christian characters God will humble by effective discipline, if they are truly his children. A preacher almost hesitates to rebuke pride in others lest he be



guilty of the sin which he thus rebukes, and the more guilty by the rebukes themselves.

Ill temper is another Canaanite still in the land of the heart. Many Christians could go to the stake to die for their Lord, did some great occasion demand martyrdom, who cannot control their temper in relation to husband or wife or child. A Christian man should be a gentleman, and a gentleman is always a gentle man. A gentleman, as the composition of the word suggests, is a man who is well-born, and a man who is a true Christian is born from heaven, born of God. He is thus a nobleman of the highest type, bearing a title that is heavenly in origin and destiny. To say that a man is a Christian ought to be equivalent to saying that he is courteous in all the relations of life. A courteous man is one having court-like manners; and a man who is an heir of God and a joint-heir with Jesus Christ, is a courtier of heaven. Christ, in giving us the Golden Rule gave us the highest law of etiquette. Jesus Christ, and not Lord Chesterfield, is the master of etiquette. The man who lives according to the Golden Rule may have never studied books on etiquette, but he will be a gentleman of the heavenly type. In so far as a man manifests bad temper, he is exhibiting a bad type of Christianity and of manhood. It is no excuse for such a man to say that it is "my way"; so to say is to emphasize the man's offense. A Christian is a new man in

Christ Jesus, and his old and mean ways must give place to the courtesy and politeness characteristic of new men in Christ Jesus.

Another Canaanite in the land of the heart is Idolatry. This is a sin to which men in all ages are especially prone; it is also a sin which strikes at the throne and person of God, and a sin which God everywhere denounces and punishes. The Apostle Paul teaches us that covetousness is idolatry; this definition universalizes the sin of idolatry. The very first command in the Decalogue denounces idolatry. The moment any object of love is placed by us before God, that moment we are guilty of idolatry. We may idolize property, art, music, husband, wife, or child. Objects which are worthy in themselves become idols when placed before God, when we give them the supreme affection which belongs to God alone. We then become virtually idolists and practically atheists.

Selfishness is another Canaanite in the land; this is one of the meanest and deadliest of our spiritual foes. When reduced to its last analysis, sin is some form of selfishness. Selfism in Cain sneeringly asked, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Selfism in Satan exalted itself above all that is called God. Christ's life was thoroughly selfless; the Christless life is thoroughly selfish. The true Christian can never be a selfist. Christ knew himself only as obedient to God and as ministrant to man; and, in proportion as we are Christly, we shall be

selfless, living only for the good of men and the glory of God.

#### USEFUL HORNETS.

Other Canaanites still in the heart might be named, but selfishness will include the entire number in all their forms of hurtfulness. Any form of hornet which will drive out these Diabolonians we ought heartily to welcome. In the history before us, the enemies of Israel hid in caves and dens, and God sent great hornets to sting these Hivites and Jebusites and to drive them out of their hiding-places. Some of them, no doubt, were stung to death by the hornets, and others were driven into the open where they fell by the sharp swords of the men of Israel.

There are hornets which sting us all in the various walks of life; mosquitoes may be more annoying, and, according to recent medical discoveries, more deadly than fierce beasts of prey. Some men suffer from domestic hornets; the husband, the wife, or the child may be the hornet, whose sting is most painful and deadly. Nagging is often the severest form of martyrdom. Many a man would a thousand times rather go to the stake than suffer the hourly scolding of some furious Xanthippe, whose name has become proverbial as a typical termagant. Many a noble woman has suffered daily martyrdom by the conduct of a brutal husband. Yet God can overrule these

experiences and transform these infuriated hornets, so that they become blessings in disguise. Recently at a convention of clergymen one of the number, who was known to have a wife whose termagancy was most boisterous and violent, gave hearty thanks that his domestic trials drove him several times each day to God in prayer, and thus became a great blessing because sanctified by the grace of God. Our hornets may be physical ailments, or bad tempers, or irritating business associates, or exasperating friends in social circles. Trials of this sort are more difficult to endure than the sharpest pains that shoot along the nerves. Some men find their path in life literally infested with hornets of various kinds. Men whom they trust prove unworthy; acquaintance with such men is the bitter sting of the cruelest imaginable hornets. Such hornets go with us morning, noon, and night. Every man has his own peculiar hornet. You think yours is the worst hornet that ever stung a man; but you have never felt the pain of the hornet which has just stung your neighbor. Every man has a cross of his own; every closet has its skeleton, and there is not a Christian man or woman who does not suffer from hornets of some species.

We ought to remember that God sent the hornets into Canaan and he sent them for a very practical purpose, the driving out of the Canaanites. Our hornets may be so sanctified as to drive out

the Canaanites from our hearts. Mr. Spurgeon takes a stanza of the familiar hymn and substitutes the word hornet for the original word, thus:

Hornets make the promise sweet,  
Hornets give new life to prayer,  
Hornets bring me to his feet,  
Lay me low and keep me there.

The day will come when we shall thank God for every hornet, however sharp its sting, which brought us in earnest prayer and true humility to the feet and heart of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

God has hornets of infinite justice which will be the messengers of his righteous indignation to punish those who resist the offers of his mercy. O men and women, yield to the invitations of God's heart as a loving father, rather than expose yourselves to the hornets of his indignation as a righteous judge. May all God's providences lead us to his loving heart!

### III

## THE SCARLET THREAD

*Text: Thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window.—Josh. 2 : 18.*

A ROMANTIC and thrilling story is that of Rahab in her relation to the spies sent by Joshua to Jericho. As a wise leader, Joshua determined to take no risks, but to know all the facts before he entered far within the confines of Canaan. He had been a spy himself, and well knew the value of the service which brave, watchful, and tactful spies could render. It was most natural, therefore, that he should reconnoiter the country by means of spies. The duty laid on these two spies was most perilous; they literally took their lives in their hands. They were going into a den of lions, and yet they were expected to return in safety. We are told that they were young men, and it is probable that they were men of great prominence in their tribes. It has been suggested that they disguised themselves, removing everything from their dress which was distinctively Hebrew; they might also assume the garb of neighboring peasants, perhaps carrying a basket, and offering produce of some sort for sale in the city.

Perhaps they were familiar with the Canaanite language and local dialect and accent. But the local officials were keenly on the watch, and the appearance of the spies as Hebrews and their manner as strangers could not long be concealed. The men had the courage necessary for the heroic enterprise, a courage whose rootage was their loyal faith in God.

We follow these men as they leave Shittim and start on their perilous journey; we see them as they cross the fords, necessitating swimming, as the waters were high; and we see them entering the gates and threading the streets of Jericho. What will be their fate? Is it probable, or even possible, that they can return alive? It was providential that they found refuge in the house of Rahab. The opening of her doors to these men marked an era in her checkered life. That act meant her own physical and spiritual salvation, and the protection of her family when the city was sacked by the Israelites. It gave her a place in the inspired narrative of Israel's history; and, as we have reason to hope, a place in the Lamb's Book of Life.

Let us for a little time attend more fully to the story itself. At the time of the arrival of the Israelites in Canaan, she was a young unmarried woman, living in a house of her own, although her parents, brothers, and sisters lived elsewhere in Jericho. A term of reproach is associated with

her name, both in the Hebrew and in the Greek Scriptures. Josephus, however, calls her an inn-keeper. Dr. Adam Clarke stoutly argues against associating an opprobrious term with her name—the term which is the usual translation of the Hebrew and Greek words. He shows, by abundant citation of authorities, that women were usually the innkeepers in Greece and Egypt in early times; and he makes mention of several strong points in the narrative in harmony with the idea that Rahab was simply the keeper of a lodging house. He vigorously deprecates the idea of applying the term harlot, as the translation of the Hebrew word *zonah*, to a woman who was an ancestress of our Lord. We need not, however, be more solicitous regarding any ancestress of Christ than were the writers of the New Testament. We ought not to attempt to be wise above what is written. We can readily find mitigating circumstances for her ill repute. It is never wise to give an unnatural interpretation to words found in Scripture. Among her people, probably, but little stigma attached to the name. Some have supposed that she was a priestess of Ashtoreth, the Phœnician Venus; if so, she was consecrated to this goddess as women are devoted to-day to similar goddesses in India. It is quite certain that there was great moral degradation among the Canaanites; it is a fact, also, that the present village of Riha, perhaps on the site of ancient Jericho,



is noted for its immorality. We are familiar with the fact that as in the case of the hetairai of Athens and of corresponding classes to-day in Japan, there was but little dishonor in her occupation, even if we give to the term which is applied to her, its severest meaning. It is certain that in her case the bonds of family life were not broken, and she exercised no little influence in the community. She seems to have had a regular trade, being engaged in the manufacture of linen and in the art of dyeing. On the flat roof of her house there were stalks of flax put there to dry, and she had also a supply of scarlet or crimson cord.

The spies desired to secure information; with the best of motives, therefore, they might seek her house. Modern detectives find the same class of persons most helpful in imparting information. Traders, passing through Jericho, which was near the fords of the Jordan, were numerous. Through them she became well informed regarding the heroic events in the history of Israel; to her the story of the passage through the Red Sea, the complete destruction of Sihon and Og, and also the present triumphant march of the Israelites were entirely familiar.

We cannot but believe that the messengers of Joshua went to her house for laudable purposes. It is certain that they would not, at such a time, forget their patriotism, their honor, and their

danger. Whatever disguise they may have adopted, they were soon suspected. Some one who observed them going to the house of Rahab informed the king concerning their visit. Rahab quickly suspected the danger to which the spies were exposed. She immediately hid them under the flax stalks which were on the roof of her house. Soon the officers of the king arrived to search the house. She was ready, however, with her plausible story, informing them that two men, of what country she did not know, had visited her house—it was not her business to be too inquisitive regarding her visitors—and that if pursuit were made immediately, the men would be overtaken. The officials took her at her word, not having half her wit; they started in pursuit toward the ford of the Jordan, the gates having been opened for their exit and immediately closed again. All was now quiet; she stole up to the roof, gave information of what had happened, and assured the spies of her faith in Israel's God. She then let them down by a cord from the window of her house which was on the city wall and probably near the edge. She instructed them, after hiding three days in the mountains, when the pursuers would have returned, to make their escape as the fords of Jordan would then be open. The men took a solemn oath, in return for her kindness, that they would protect her and all her family when Jericho should fall into the power of the

Israelites. Her plans worked admirably; the officials of the king, after their wild-geese chase, returned to Jericho; and the spies of Joshua returned in safety to the camp of Israel. The sign agreed upon between her and the spies was the hanging of the scarlet line in the window from which they had escaped. The narrative distinctly informs us that Joshua saved her and her father's house and all that she had. The narrator adds, "and she dwelleth in Israel unto this day."

#### SUBSEQUENT BIBLICAL HISTORY.

A marvelous moment was it in her life when she became the friend of Joshua's messengers; her act in that connection made her immortal. In Matt. 1 : 5, we learn that she became the wife of Salmon, and the mother of Boaz, who was the grandfather of Jesse. Most writers suppose that Salmon was one of the spies whom she so greatly befriended at a critical moment in their lives; if so, we see that not only gratitude but a more tender passion toward her filled his soul. We know that the spies were young men, and it is not at all improbable that Salmon was one of the two. It is quite certain, on the authority of Matthew, that Rahab was a mother in the line from which David and eventually Christ sprang. We thus see that she was an ancestress of David and so of Christ himself. Boaz was a nobleman in the history of Israel. Ruth, the Moabitess, was the

daughter-in-law of Rahab; and David was her grandchild's grandchild. Jesus of Nazareth had her blood in his veins. Most remarkable is it that Matthew, in his genealogy of our Lord—taking his statements, in all probability, from the public archives—mentions but four women, Thamar, Rahab—almost assuredly the Rahab of Joshua's narrative—Ruth, and impliedly Bathsheba. Three of these have tainted names, and the fourth was, by birth, a heathen; and all the four were apparently foreigners. Each of the four became a mother in the Messianic line in an extraordinary way. This fact is probably the reason why their names are given. How little could Rahab know what was meant in her history and her destiny for time and eternity in her act of kindness to the emissaries of Joshua! She was indeed led by a way she knew not.

#### MORAL DIFFICULTIES IN RAHAB'S CASE

These difficulties are numerous and great. It is cowardly to deny their existence. One of these difficulties is found in her treachery to her own people. This treachery was real. Can it be justified? In itself, it was utterly condemnable. It is justifiable only on the ground that fidelity to her country would have been infidelity to God. The claims of God are supreme; as against them the claims springing out of the ties of country and family are utterly subordinate. The higher duty

which men owe to God holds in suspense the lower duty to country and to family. It is certain that she did not forget the obligations of family relationship; she was greatly influenced by natural affection; but her loyalty to the true God rightly overcame her devotion to the abominable gods of her country.

Another moral difficulty is the falsehood which she told regarding the escape of the spies. This was a plain falsehood. There ought to be no attempt made to deny the true character of her statement; neither ought any attempt to be made to justify it. There may be times when to save our own life, as, for example, when attacked by a madman, a falsehood is justifiable; but a lie, in itself considered, must always be offensive to the God of truth. No casuistry can make this part of her conduct wholly right. In Heb. 11 : 31, and in James 2 : 25, she is commended. This commendation has greatly perplexed some Bible students; but on what account is she commended? For her previous life? No. For her treachery to her country? No. For her falsehood regarding the spies? No. For what, then, is she commended? In Hebrews, she is eulogized for her faith; and in James, for her works. Many of those who are commended in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews are not indorsed in their entirety. They are praised simply for some worthy act, or as an example of heroic faith. We may heartily commend

an orator for his eloquence, while we may earnestly oppose his vagaries as a statesman.

#### THE CONFESSION OF HER FAITH.

A very remarkable woman was Rahab. She was the first Canaanite whom the Israelites met across the Jordan, and she showed herself to be characterful to a striking degree. She was probably the only person in all that dark and guilty land who believed in Israel's God and in God's Israel. In some mysterious way rays of divine light had fallen upon her soul. Christ is the light of the world; and all true light, through whatever medium it comes, is from Christ as its central source. Rahab made an explicit avowal of her faith in Jehovah as the only God of heaven and earth. Such a confession, in her circumstances, is simply marvelous. It set aside all her early training and all the opinions of her people. There was now a great gulf between Rahab as the worshiper of Baal and Ashtoreth, and Rahab as a believer in the true God. Her heathen faith now disappeared; and with it her old conduct and character; her soul awoke to a new life and to an exalted destiny.

She also clearly gave the reason for her faith; it was a faith that reasoned from facts. Her knowledge went back through the long years to the triumphs of God at the Red Sea; it also recognized, as we have already seen, the utter

destruction of Sihon and Og. She reasoned that the God of Israel must be mightier than the gods of her country. Thus, history confirmed her incipient faith. True history is always a witness for God. If men would but study God's acts, they could not doubt God's existence. Her faith was practical, bringing forth fruit in works. Her woman's ingenuity was finely shown. A new life was the fruit of her new faith. That faith made her immortal; but for that faith and its appropriate fruit, we never should have heard of her name. She linked her name with Jesus Christ; and, in her measure, she shares in the immortality of the Name above every name.

#### SYMBOLISM OF THE SCARLET CORD.

In all ages of the church, the deliverance by Rahab has been deemed typical of salvation through the blood of Christ. The scarlet line has always suggested the blood of redemption. It is not here taught that Scripture anywhere makes this affirmation; but the suggestion has occurred to almost all students of Scripture and preachers of redemption. It is in line with the teaching of the ark of Noah, and of the blood of the Paschal lamb on the lintel and side posts of the doors of the houses of the Israelites in Egypt. The scarlet cord was the means of the salvation of the messengers, and later of the salvation of Rahab and her household. Only that scarlet cord could in-

sure safety; if the conditions of safety in relation to this sign had not been observed, safety would have been impossible. In this respect, the scarlet cord becomes profoundly significant. It is interesting that interpreters have so heartily agreed on the typical significance of this scarlet line. Thus, we find Clement, Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, and Theodoret, all following and emphasizing this thought. The phrase "scarlet cord," is used in this discourse as the synonym of safety through the vicarious intervention or suffering of another. This thought is the very heart of the atonement. Atonement is simply at-one-ment; it is a bringing together so as to be at one. It is the expiation of sin made by the obedience and sufferings of Christ. Many persons violently oppose this idea as a part of our Christian religion; but if they object to this thought in religion, they ought to object to it in all life. The scarlet line runs through the entire Bible; it also runs through all human history. An American poet has expressed the universality of this law when he said:

Life evermore is fed by death,  
In earth and sea and sky;  
And that a rose may breathe its breath,  
Something must die.

It suggests some of the noblest and most heroic acts ever performed among men. To take the



scarlet line out of life would rob it of much of its glory. It is amazing that critics object to what they call "blood theology," when they highly praise what they call "blood friendship." It was the spirit of the scarlet cord that gave us the superbly heroic story of Damon and Pythias; it gave us the glorious friendship of David and Jonathan, either of whom would have died for the other; it made their friendship immortal; it gave us Eleanor, the wife of Edward I. of England, sucking the poison from her husband's wound, risking her life to save his. It gave us the marvelous bravery of the Japanese, giving their lives with enthusiastic joy to save the life of their nation. That was a touching funeral at which the pastor of this church officiated a few days ago; a beautiful young woman was so severely burned that she died as the result of the burns and the shock. At the service her sister sat with hands and arms bound up and helpless from burns received in the attempt to rescue her sister from the flames. In response to a sympathetic remark of the pastor, she said, "I would have given both my arms if I could have saved my sister's life." This was the scarlet line in that family; this was the spirit of Jesus Christ in his vicarious suffering for our redemption. Let theologians wrangle about theories of the atonement; we here simply emphasize the blessed fact of Christ's vicarious death for the salvation of mankind. He tasted death for

every man; he gave himself a ransom for all. He is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world. He exalted all the noblest forms of unselfish sacrifice to the highest conceivable degree. In the Old Testament the word atonement signified the reconciliation with God by means of bloody sacrifices. Christ was the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. This is the sublimest fact in human history. How can Lady Macbeth cleanse her hand? Can great Neptune's ocean wash away the blood of her sin? How can that hand, how can men's souls, be washed white? That is the problem of the universe. Suffering humanity, since sin entered the world, has been saying to every prophet in turn:

Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased . . .  
And with some sweet oblivious antidote  
Cleanse the stuffed bosom of that perilous stuff  
Which weighs upon the heart?

No poppy or mandragora, or all the drowsy syrups of human concoction, can give the troubled soul peace. We hear God saying through Isaiah, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." We hear the voice of Jesus saying, "Come unto me, all ye that labor, and are heavy laden"; thus I preach to you, with my whole soul, the forgiveness of sins by the

precious blood of Jesus Christ. His sacrifice is the scarlet cord running through the Bible, through all human history, and reaching to himself before the throne, as the Lamb that had been slain from before the foundation of the world.

## IV

### THE NUPTIAL RIDDLE

*Text : And he said unto them, Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness. And they could not in three days expound the riddle.—Judg. 14 : 14.*

SAMSON is a psychological puzzle, and a theological enigma. His history has given the skeptics occasion for doubts and infidels for scoffs regarding revealed religion. His character is almost inexplicable. One almost wishes that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews had not given him a place in the list of the heroes and heroines of faith found in the eleventh chapter of that Epistle. It must be borne in mind, however, that in mentioning Samson the author did not indorse his entire conduct and character; he simply commended Samson's faith. This commendation was entirely just. Although Samson's life cannot be approved in many respects, it is, nevertheless, true that, on several occasions, he manifested remarkable faith in God, and God greatly honored this great faith. There was no judge in Israel whose faults were so numerous and grave, and yet there was no judge in Israel through whom God

wrought so many miracles as he did through Samson.

His name probably means "little sun" or "sun-like"; some, however, give it the significance of "strong" or "awe." If the idea of awe is in the name, it would refer to the astonishment of his father and mother when the angel announced his birth. The office of judge he filled for twenty years. He is distinctly spoken of in Scripture as receiving supernatural power when he was moved upon by the Spirit of the Lord.

He was also a Nazarite. Many writers believe that some of the legends associated with the name of Hercules were brought to the Greeks by Phœnician traditions of Samson's great strength. This is not at all improbable. Phœnician traders constantly visited Greece and Italy. Both the virtues and vices attributed to Samson are found in Hercules; so is also the buffoonery attributed to Samson. There is no doubt as to the historicity regarding the essential features of his character and work. In Heb. 11 : 32 his name is associated with the names of Gideon, Barak, and Jephthah; there he is honored as one of those who acted valiantly and turned to flight the armies of the aliens, and his prowess is attributed to his faith in God.

The text for this occasion brings us to the events connected with his marriage. It was unfortunate that he chose for his wife one of the daughters

of the Philistines. We must, however, commend the frankness with which he told his father and mother of the connection he intended to form. God overruled Samson's ensnarement by this Philistine woman so as to secure eventually the signal overthrow of the Philistines as the enemies of God. On his way to Timnath, in connection with his choice of a wife, Samson was accompanied by his father and mother; and on the journey the Spirit of the Lord came so mightily upon him that he rent a young lion, which roared against him, as if this fierce beast had been a harmless kid. Later he returned to take the chosen woman as his wife. On this occasion he found that in the carcass of the lion there was a swarm of bees and considerable honey, several months probably having elapsed between the ceremony of espousal and that of marriage, between his first and his second visit to Timnath. The carcass had now become a dry and naked skeleton, and so would not be repugnant as a habitation to bees, noted as they are for their cleanly habits. Some of this honey Samson took for himself and some of it he gave to his father and mother, but he did not inform them as to the source whence the honey was derived.

We are now at Timnath and in the midst of Samson's nuptial feast. It was customary then all over the East that nuptial festivities continued for seven days; at the conclusion of which period

the bride was brought to her husband. Samson was a Nazarite, and yet he so far conformed to the customs of the country as to join in these nuptial rejoicings. Thirty young men, friends of his wife, were brought to Samson ostensibly to honor him, as groomsmen. It is not improbable, however, that they were really spies about his person. Something in his appearance excited their jealousy and indicated that he was a man to be watched. The Philistines were proper objects of suspicion on the part of the Israelites, even when they brought favors, as were the Greeks to their foes; even when, in the classic phrase, they came bearing gifts.

It was the custom among the Hebrews and Philistines, as also among the Greeks, to entertain the company on festal occasions with riddles, enigmas, and other sayings curious, difficult, and obscure. It was common, on these occasions, to recompense those who found out the obscure sayings by giving them a goblet of wine or a festal crown. Those who failed to solve the enigma were condemned to drink wine mingled with sea water, their hands, meantime, being tied behind their backs and they being compelled to drink this undesirable mixture at one draught. Sometimes the crown was given to the deity in whose honor the festival was held; and in case no one solved the riddle the reward was given to its proposer. Greek writers cite many examples of riddles and puzzles

of this class, which they describe as "banquet-riddles," or "cup questions." Samson followed this ancient and general custom. The riddle he propounded he must have originated, as it was based on his own achievement, and as neither the company, nor even his own father and mother, knew of his exploit in killing the lion, nor of his experience in discovering the honey.

#### THE RIDDLE.

The riddle is given in full in the text of this discourse. Apart from the difficulty of solving it as a riddle, there is a slight difficulty in understanding its terms. The antithesis in its first clause is entirely obvious; it is the antithesis between the ideas that an all-devouring creature should furnish food. The opposition of ideas here is contrary to all expectation. But, in the second part of the text, the antithesis is obscure; sweetness is made the opposite of strength, but the natural opposite of strength is weakness. Many scholars, however, have clearly shown that the original word for strong may be translated bitter or sharp. We are quite accustomed, even to this day, to speak of food in certain conditions as being strong, when we really mean bitter. Both the Syriac and the Arabic versions have the word bitter instead of strong; so do some copies of the Greek Septuagint. We know also that in Latin *acer*, sharp, when applied to a man, and also as applied to



animals, means valiant, fierce, suggesting eagerness to engage the enemy. It is almost certain that the riddle was in poetry. The enigma was one which would tax the ingenuity to the utmost. We may put the riddle in this form: "Food came from the devourer, and sweetness from bitterness." Matthew Henry is severe on those who were unable to solve the riddle, when he says that if they only had sufficient sense to consider what eater is most strong and what meat is most sweet, they would have found out the riddle. But all difficulties seem comparatively simple when we discover their explanation. We then wonder that we ever stumbled at their solution. It was easy to make an egg stand on end when Columbus pressed it down with such force that the shell of one end was slightly crushed; but his companions had long tried in vain to perform the trick until he showed them with what ease it could be done. Samson's enigma was well adapted to the purpose designed by Providence in its solution. It was quite ungallant in the companions of Samson to procure from his wife, by their unreasonable importunity, the key to his suggestive riddle; neither was it, as we would put it, playing the game fair.

#### SPIRITUAL APPLICATIONS.

We are, however, more concerned with the spiritual lessons which may be learned from the

riddle than with any other of its features. These lessons are numerous and practical. The riddle and its solution are clearly applicable to many of the methods of divine providence and grace. Life is full of illustrations of the fact that sweetness may be extracted from bitterness, and that grievous sorrows may be transformed into celestial benedictions. When God brings, by an overruling providence, good out of evil; when he makes the enemies of his church contribute to its advancement; when he makes the wrath of man add to his glory, then comes meat out of the eater, then comes sweetness out of bitterness.

It is possible for us to make practical applications of this broad principle. The principle applies to the occurrence of sin. Why was sin ever permitted to enter God's fair creation? This is the problem of the universe; this is the deepest abyss in philosophical speculation or in theological inquiry. Could God be both omnipotent and benevolent, and yet permit sin to enter the world? The loftiest angel before God's throne cannot satisfactorily answer that question; certainly human understanding cannot fully sound this great deep. To explain sin, is to excuse sin; this is an irrefutable statement. We dare not excuse sin, but we can readily see that if God were to make man, he must make him free. If he were not free, he were not man; but, if free, he might choose evil rather than good; this man did, hence all our woes. We

can also see how God can overrule evil, so that out of it good will come. Briars have their part in human discipline as well as roses. The thunderstorm purifies the air, and so has its place in the economy of nature as truly as the sunshine. Darkness is as essential to the growth of vegetation as the light. Adversity is often more effective in the discipline of the mind and heart than is prosperity. God extracts honey from fierce trials, and manifold sweetness from painful bitterness. To find honey in a lion's carcass was a unique discovery. It is still true that the bitter comes before the sweet, and that the bitter makes the sweet sweeter.

From man's lost estate God extracted repentance of sin and a return to himself. Our grievous sin was the occasion of God's most glorious manifestation of his eternal love. Sin reigned in the first Adam; grace triumphed in the second Adam. Sinners redeemed from earth can sing sweeter songs in heaven than angels who never sinned. Christ as the king of glory was even more resplendent in his earthly humiliation than he was in his celestial exaltation. Not so glorious was he when receiving the joyful acclamations of seraphs, as when receiving the thanksgiving of redeemed sinners. The cradle in Bethlehem, the carpenter's bench in Nazareth, and the cross on Calvary are more wonderful and glorious than the radiant throne of his preexistent glory with the Father.

Christ conquered death and the grave. Out of death, the mighty devourer, came heavenly food; and out of the sharpness of the cross came the sweetness of divine mercy, and the opening of the kingdom of heaven to all believers.

#### PROVIDENTIAL AFFLICTIONS.

The afflictions of God's people illustrate the principle of Samson's riddle, as already expounded. Mysteries abound in God's providences. In these providences there are wheels within wheels; but, if our faith be strong, we shall sweetly know that every wheel is in its proper place. The trial of our faith is more precious than gold that perisheth. Our light affliction results in an eternal weight of glory. There are no mistakes in God's providences; in God's sight there are no broken shafts in God's acre. Out of trial come the graces of faith, hope, love, and joy. Poets learn in suffering what they teach in song. Some of the sweetest psalms were composed in the bitterness of terrible trial. Joseph's path to a prison was his highway to a throne. Out of Bunyan's prison came the "Pilgrim's Progress," carrying the name of Bunyan and of Christ around the world. On her couch of pain Elizabeth Barrett, afterward Elizabeth Barrett Browning, wrote in twelve hours so as to catch the American steamer, and so to oblige her publisher, "Lady Geraldine's Courtship." In that poem she gave deserved praise

to Robert Browning's lofty verse, and uttered other noble thoughts which helped her to win enduring fame. But for her seven years of invalidism, during which she was confined to her room, some of her noblest poems would never have been written. But for her room darkened by grief and her heart broken by sorrow, Anne Steele, more than one hundred of whose hymns are in various collections, would never have been much known beyond her native shire. Milton's blindness led him to see the celestial glories described in "Paradise Lost." Lights and shadows give beauty to paintings and landscapes. Lights and shadows give heavenly glory to earthly experiences. Often the death of our earthly comforts is the birth of our heavenly graces. Trial is an evidence of sonship; for the Lord chastens all his true children. Out of the Marah of sorrow God brings the Elim of rest and joy. God's sweetest honey is often found in the skeleton of some painful grief.

#### DEATH THE FULLEST ILLUSTRATION.

The principle of Samson's riddle, as already explained, finds its fullest illustration in the Christian's severest trial, the article of death. Death is our last enemy; death is an unwelcome intruder; he is a trespasser on the fair fields of earth. But for sin, there would be no death, in our ordinary sense of that term. In a striking passage in

the Epistle to the Romans, the Apostle Paul represents death as reigning from Adam unto Moses. Here death is represented as a monarch enthroned and swaying a scepter over all the generations of men. His reign is absolute, universal, unescapable, and would be eternal but for the triumph of Jesus Christ, who is the Author of life, the Vanquisher of death, and the King of glory. We have a right to hate death as a fruit of sin; but, thank God, we may have a complete victory over death; we may now say, "Thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Jesus Christ came forth from the realm of death with the key of death and hades hanging from his girdle. Death is now a conquered foe. Death stung Jesus on the cross, but the sting was left in the wood of that cross. Death is now dethroned, discrowned, and unsceptered. Out of this age-hoary monster has come forth meat; out of this sin-sharpened bitterness has come heavenly sweetness. Now celestial bees gather honey from paradisaic flowers growing even around the earthly grave. Instead of being the jailer of hades, death is now to the Christian the porter of paradise. Living is really dying. Dying is really living. No men who have ever really lived ever really die. Charles H. Spurgeon and Joseph Parker still live; and Henry Ward Beecher, John Hall, and William M. Taylor are truly alive to-day. Margaret Bottome will live through coming

generations. On this side of heaven we are exiles; in heaven we shall be citizens. This side of heaven we are orphans; in heaven we shall be children in our Father's home. He was a lieutenant of an Iowa regiment who was wounded during the Civil War. Those standing about him said, "Lieutenant, you have but a few hours to live, have you any message for your wife?" His answer was, "Tell my wife that there is not a cloud between me and Jesus." It was our heroic Baptist brother, Sir Henry Havelock, the real hero of the Sepoy Rebellion, as he lay dying yonder near Lucknow, and whose tomb is an obelisk thirty feet high in the Alambagh near that city, who said to Sir James Outram, "For more than forty years I have so ruled my life, that when death came I might face it without fear. I am not in the least afraid; to die is gain." To his eldest son, who waited upon him with the utmost tenderness, he said, "Come, my son, and see how a Christian can die."

Death is the believer's resting day, conquering day, and coronation day. Faith in God is the solution for all the riddles of life. It is the thought of Martin Luther that the volume containing the history of God's providences is, to our earthly vision, upside down. However earnestly and prayerfully we may try to solve the enigmas of providence, they still remain enigmas; but when we have passed into the other world and,

from its lofty height, look backward, the volume of providence will then be right side up. Read from this viewpoint, all the enigmas of life will be solved, and one of the sweetest strains in our song of triumph will be, "He hath done all things well." Let us so live that, whether living or dying, we may triumphantly sing, "Thanks be to God who giveth the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ."



## V

### THE STRENGTHENED HAND

*Text: And Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David into the wood, and strengthened his hand in God.—1 Sam. 23 : 16.*

DAVID was now in the wilderness of Ziph. This place stands on the edge of a plateau as the country suddenly descends to a desert region. This region was very secluded, but even here David found no rest. He is, if possible, worse off than before entering Keilah. He is now an outcast and fugitive, hiding daily for his life in the rugged wilderness of Ziph. He had experienced the ingratitude of the people of Keilah, and he also experienced the treachery of the Ziphites, as well as the persecution of Saul. Some of his greatest perils and happiest escapes took place in this neighborhood; indeed, the whole region is immortalized because of its connection with David.

On this occasion his presence was soon betrayed to Saul, and a large force was sent to secure his person. He was hunted like a partridge from hill to hill; frequently there was but a step between him and death. These trying experiences

were of great value as a discipline for the future. His constant danger led him daily to seek divine strength. Out of these experiences came some of his most pathetic and powerful psalms. He greatly needed human as well as divine help and sympathy, and human help and affectionate sympathy came to him in a remarkable degree.

#### THE STRENGTHENER OF DAVID.

Let us, in the first place, call attention to him who strengthened David. This was none other than the heroic and lovable Jonathan, Saul's son. The visit he made to David must have greatly cheered his heart in the midst of his terrible dangers. The world has repeatedly heard of the devoted attachment between Damon and Pythias. These two Syracusans were disciples of Pythagoras, and are justly celebrated for their loyal friendship and unfailing fidelity. In the Bible we have several charming illustrations of a friendship equally sincere and beautiful. The world will never forget the idyllic simplicity and gentle pathos of the story of Ruth, the Moabitish woman, and of Naomi, her afflicted mother-in-law. The friendship between Paul, the aged, and Timothy, the youthful disciple, has touched all hearts and has become classical and immortal. But nowhere, either in sacred or secular story, can we find a friendship more generous and unselfish and more reciprocal than that between David and

Jonathan. This friendship has often been admired and imitated, but it has never been surpassed, and it has been seldom, if ever, equaled. Fiction never painted a picture so beautiful as these facts suggest and complete on the page of sacred history. The pen of inspiration has limned the portraits of these heroic leaders of armies.

The terms in which their friendship is described are as rhetorically beautiful as they are tenderly instructive. David says, "Thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of woman"; and Jonathan, as expressive of his highest ambition, says, "Thou shalt be king in Israel and I shall be next unto thee." Nothing in Hebrew poetry is more beautiful and touching than David's lament over Jonathan; nothing of an elegiac character in any of the poets is more perfect as a whole, or more marked in its parts by striking images and tender thoughts. While any literature lasts, this elegy will remain as one of the noblest tributes which affection has ever produced. Tennyson's "In Memoriam," some of whose parts are melancholy as the moan of the ocean, is surpassed by this ancient Hebrew dirge.

The friendship of David and Jonathan, so sacred in itself, was made all the sweeter by the adversity which both experienced. Their friendship illustrated the words of Addison:

Great souls by instinct to each other turn,  
Demand alliance, and in friendship burn.

E

No jealousy between these men marred the harmony of their constant devotion. Each found in the other that which neither found in his own family. Each was valiant and heroic in himself, and so each knew how to appreciate similar gifts in the other.

Nothing can be more beautiful than the manner in which their friendship began. David bravely met, valiantly challenged, and heroically conquered the boastful Goliath; and, in that act of victory over the huge barbarian, he completely won the heart of the noble Jonathan. Unselfish valor knows how rightly to esteem unselfish valor. From that day the heart of Jonathan was David's, and the heart of David was Jonathan's. That victory was, in many respects, the turning-point in David's life; but, in no respect, was it more important to him than as to the place which it secured for him on the throne of Jonathan's heart. Jonathan was as capable as he was valiant. Not more masterful was his father Saul with the spear than was Jonathan with the bow; and the bow is always associated with his name and his deeds of war. In his first appearance he is closely associated with Saul as his companion; and the entire narrative shows the deep attachment which existed between father and son. The strength of this attachment is shown by the tragic effect on Saul when he is determined to fulfil his vow even "if it be Jonathan, my son." Jonathan is

spoken of as "strong as a lion and swift as an eagle." He was at home in climbing on his hands and feet up the face of cliffs, or in any other adventurous undertaking in war. But in nothing does his noble career so resplendently shine as in his friendship toward David. We read that "the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul."

Jonathan, as the strengthener of David, was also truly a generous friend. He was the king's son, while David was only a shepherd boy. As heir-apparent to the throne, David's promotion would defeat Jonathan's legitimate ambitions and his natural aspirations. One of the noblest characteristics of John the Baptist was that he joyfully decreased that Jesus might gloriously increase. No evidence of his divine nobility could be greater than his willingness to take a secondary place; and this characteristic we find beautifully illustrated in Jonathan. He occupied a most delicate position, standing between David and the throne. He well knew that God was to give that throne to the young shepherd of Bethlehem; but, in the intensity of his affection, he loved to think of David as his master and king. His brightest dreams suggested nothing more beautiful for himself than that he should be next to David in friendship while David reigned over Israel. Indeed, it appears that he cared more for the honor of being next to David than for occupying any other place

of influence in the kingdom. Such a man as Jonathan is a friend in adversity. Well might David prize his visit now in his trying position in the lonely forest of Ziph.

Happy are we, if, in business relations, in family affections, and in church friendships, we have a friend like Jonathan to strengthen our hand in God. May God help us to prize such friends; may God help us in our measure to be such friends to others in their time of need! Thus shall we illustrate the words of Dryden:

For friendship, of itself a holy tie,  
Is made more sacred by adversity.

In the development of God's purpose, men performing subordinate service are as necessary in their place as are those in more conspicuous positions. David was a greater man than Jonathan, and yet David was greatly dependent on the support which Jonathan rendered. In all the walks of life, there is need of the service of subordinate workers in the kingdom of God. In the totality of vegetation, every ray of light and drop of dew is necessary. The trained ear of the leader of a great orchestra misses the notes of even the least important instrument. Moses needed Aaron and Hur; Elijah was dependent upon the bounty of a poor widow, and even upon the services of ravens; Luther needed his Melancthon; John Wesley his brother Charles, and Charles H. Spurgeon

his brother James. We cannot always trace the interlacings of spiritual agencies; we do not always know the value of the prayers of lowly saints in the enduement with spiritual power of the distinguished workers for God. The secret of the power of devoted missionaries, successful pastors, and great religious leaders, did we know all the facts, could perhaps be traced to the earnest prayers of obscure saints. Often the best service we can render to God is to inspire with heroic courage the hearts of those called to a work to which we are not called and for which we may not have the capacity. We may, in our measure, be Jonathans to the immortal Davids in the kingdom of God.

#### THE PLACE OF STRENGTHENING.

We notice, secondly, the place of David's strengthening—"in the wood." If ever a man was in trying circumstances, David was that man at this time; if ever a man needed help, David was that man at this time. He was exposed to the cruel hatred of Saul, to the foul treachery of the Ziphites, and to the base ingratitude of the Keilahites. Saul was striving by every means in his power to put David to death. From one stronghold to another, David was driven without rest and without safety. He was able to procure only a precarious subsistence and, at times, he was ready to sink in utter despondency. Saul

sought him daily, and the people of Ziph were ready to reveal his hiding-place. He had with him only six hundred armed men. His number was too large to be readily concealed, and too small to make victory over Saul reasonably certain. It was, indeed, a critical time for David. He was a man of poetic nature and of sensitive soul; he, therefore, keenly felt the injustice of ingrates and the insane opposition of Saul.

It is impossible to conceive a more welcome and opportune visit than that made to him by Jonathan at this time. In his physical distress, mental anxiety, and spiritual depression, he needed the help of a friend who loveth at all times, and such an earthly friend was Jonathan. Marvelous indeed was their sweet friendship. Touching are the words descriptive of this meeting, the last time that David and Jonathan ever met :

O heart of fire! misjudged by wilful man,  
Thou flower of Jesse's race!  
What woe was thine, when thou and Jonathan  
Last greeted face to face!  
He doomed to die, thou on us to impress  
The portent of a bloodstained holiness.

The wisest and best of men sometimes get into the wilderness. Then, if ever, they need true friends. Friends are apt to be numerous and demonstrative when all goes well and they are not needed; but they are apt to become few and



cold when we most need their help. Happy are we, if we can then enjoy the sympathy of our friends; happier still are we if, when our friends most need our help, we are willing to go to them "in the wood" and give them our sympathy and succor.

#### THE MANNER OF STRENGTHENING.

We notice, in the third place, the manner in which David was strengthened by Jonathan—"strengthened his hand in God." He made his way to David in the thickets of the forest as if sent directly by God. He consoled David by the promises of God, and, by the grasp of his own hand; finally, by placing his hand in the hand of the Almighty. This is one of the finest touches in all the accounts of the relations between David and Jonathan. Jonathan might have given David many other forms of help, but no other encouragement could have produced the desired result. He gave David his own loving and generous human affection, and then he lifted his thoughts to God. Jonathan could not levy troops and lead an army against his father Saul, even to help his friend David; but he did that which was even better, he strengthened his hand in God. He comforted David by assurances of the divine purpose and promise. Thus Jacob was comforted at Bethel; thus Paul, in the storm at sea; thus Christ, in Gethsemane. His ministry to David

was not in vain. It is believed that the Fifty-fourth Psalm was written by David at this time. Its second and fourth verses have been thus translated:

O God, hear my prayer ;  
Give ear to the words of my mouth,  
Behold, God is my helper,  
The Lord is the upholder of my soul.

We all need to learn the lesson which Jonathan here taught David and teaches us. We are ever prone to go to Assyria and to Egypt instead of to God for help. In times of coldness in our churches, we seek for popular evangelists and for approved machinery. We ought to strengthen ourselves and others by going directly to God. God help us to put our hand at once in his, that we may realize his divine strength.

#### OTHER SPIRITUAL LESSONS.

Precious lessons are suggested by this narrative. First, Jonathan was the mediator between Saul and David; but he failed to secure a reconciliation. But Christ, our Jonathan, is the true and successful mediator between sinful men and a holy God. He is the blessed Daysman. He brings us into sweet harmony and loving communion with God.

Secondly, Jonathan, though a loving friend, had to take leave of David in the wilderness; he could not remain with his friend. But Christ never

leaves those who trust him. He sticketh closer than a brother. Christ is the friend at all times, and a brother born for adversity. Never were David and Jonathan to meet again. Death was to break their companionship, but Jesus is the friend from whom we need never be severed. He comes to us in the desert and abides with us until he brings us into a wealthy place.

Thirdly, Jonathan endangered his life for David; but Christ gave his life for you and me. Oh, what a friend we have in Jesus! Let us go to him now in our weakness, helplessness, and sinfulness. Wandering in the wilderness of sin, we can lay our hands in his. He will strengthen us in God, and when all our wanderings in the wilderness of this life are over, he will present us to his Father and ours, amid the songs of saints and the shouts of angels. Blessed Jesus, thou art our true, our divine Jonathan.

## VI

### THE MAIMED PRINCE

*Text: And it came to pass, as she made haste to flee that he fell, and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth.—2 Sam. 4 : 4.*

PATHOS and romance blend in equal proportions in the history of Mephibosheth. Few histories in the Bible more tenderly touch our sympathies. His family bereavement, his physical lameness, his prolonged obscurity, the misrepresentation of him to David by Ziba, and David's partial distrust of him evoke our sympathy. The story of his life will repay us in its inherent interest and in its practical lessons.

Most of the men in the inner circle of David's life were lovable men. David's name probably means "beloved"; his personality must have been peculiarly attractive. He gathered about himself men, for the most part, like himself in harmony with the law of moral gravitation. Mephibosheth was no exception to this general law.

#### HIS NAME.

His name is not without significance in itself and in its relation to his family, as two members

of the family of Saul bore this name. Attention has been called to the fact that Bosheth was a favorite appellation in the family of Saul, as no fewer than three members of that family bear this name, two Mephibosheths and one Ishbosheth. It is true that in the genealogies in First Chronicles, the word Baal takes the place of Bosheth. In Jeremiah and Hosea, the names Baal and Bosheth apparently are convertible terms, the name Bosheth having in it the idea of contempt and shame, and being thus a derisive synonym of the name Baal. Perhaps originally the names were Baal, but in Samuel this heathen name is discarded, and the substitute Bosheth is employed. The son of the beloved Jonathan has given a certain charm to this name, and has invested it with a halo of romance.

#### HIS EARLY MISFORTUNE.

Too early in life to understand its significance, he experienced a great family bereavement. On the slopes of Gilboa three sons of Saul, Jonathan, Abinadab, and Malchishua, with their father, were slain. Saul began the battle paralyzed with the forebodings resulting from the predictions of the sorceress of Endor. The Hebrews fought bravely all day; but they were powerless against the chariots, cavalry, and mailed troops of the Philistines. We behold Saul wearing his turban and royal bracelet, accompanied by his armor-bearer, as he

is pressed closer and closer by the Philistine bowmen. He has cast away his shield, but the spear is still in his hand. He will not flee in cowardice from the field; neither will he suffer himself to be captured and thus to die a shameful death. The archers are pressing him sorely; he calls on his armor-bearer to take his life. This act the armor-bearer refuses to perform. Then Saul fell on his own sword; the darkness of death is coming upon him as a wild Amalekite gave him a final thrust with his sword. The sacred narrative, however, conveys the idea that he died by his own hand, and that, seeing him dead, his armor-bearer killed himself also. The defeat of Israel was terrible; its memory long lingered in song and story. Saul's head and weapons were taken as trophies by the enemy, and his skull was placed in the temple of Dagon at Ashdod. The bow of Jonathan was placed in the temple of Astarte in Bethshean. There finally were nailed the corpses of both Saul and Jonathan. No words can overstate the sad defeat of Israel.

The soldiers of the enemy continued their victorious march south and west, and soon occupied all the more important towns. Gibeah was Saul's own mountain village; the enemy approached that village, filling every home and heart with alarm. In that village dwelt the boy Mephibosheth, son of Jonathan, and scion of the royal house of Saul. He was then but five years of age,

and was living under the charge of his nurse. From hill to hill the news was carried of the defeat and death of the king and his sons, and of the approach of the Philistines. The nurse who had charge of Prince Mephibosheth was filled with alarm; she feared that the whole house of Saul would be exterminated. She placed the child on her shoulder, as is still the manner of carrying children in the East, to carry him to a place of safety; but, in her alarm and panic, she stumbled, and the unfortunate child was thrown to the ground with such force that he became lame in both feet for life. He thus early became the "Maimed Prince." In times when agility and strength were greatly esteemed, such a calamity unfitted him for taking active part in the stirring political events of the hour. He ought to have been the heir of the house of Saul. His lameness prevented him from appearing either as the rival of Ishbosheth or of David. His lameness threw a deep shadow over his entire life; it exercised a depressing and depreciatory influence on his estimate of himself, and clouded all his hopes for the future. Later, he speaks of himself as a poor lame slave, and even as a dead dog. Physical deformity, whether congenital or accidental, is almost certain to depress or embitter the spirit. Lord Byron's character cannot be understood except due weight be given to his physical deformity; it embittered his spirit toward his mother

and toward life in all its relations. The case of a greatly learned and deeply consecrated clergyman, whose whole life was shadowed by a physical deformity, emphasizes the remarks here made regarding Mephibosheth. It could not well be otherwise than that this sad misfortune, accompanied by terrible bereavement, should have entirely changed the child's life. His spirit for the time, and in part always, was crushed; he thinks of himself as an abject dependent. He submits to the slanders of Ziba and the unfairness of David in a spirit which evokes our sympathy and almost provokes our criticism.

#### HIS OBSCURE YEARS.

He was carried over the Jordan with the rest of his family and found refuge in the mountains of Gilead. There he grew up in the house of a famous chief named Machir, one of the great men beyond the Jordan. The home of this powerful Gadite chief of Lodebar was not far from Mahanaim, at which place were the headquarters of the family during the reign of his uncle, Ishbosheth. In the quiet and obscurity of this place, Mephibosheth passed his early years. His obscurity was so great that his very existence was long unknown to David; but he seems to have been married and to have lived in that remote region until David had subjugated the adversaries of Israel, and had time to inquire whether any members of



the family of Jonathan still survived. David could never forget his love for Jonathan, the father of Mephibosheth; that love still glowed in his soul with undiminished fervor. On the occasion of the eventful interview between David and Jonathan by the stone Ezel, David promised that his kindness to the house of Jonathan should never cease. Learning that a son of Jonathan still lived, David yearned to show him kindness for his father's sake.

#### HIS PRESENTATION TO DAVID.

This was a remarkable event in the life of this maimed man. Ziba, in earlier days a slave or steward in the royal household, but now a freedman, gave information to David regarding the existence of Mephibosheth. The discovery by David of the son of Jonathan stirred his soul. Royal messengers were immediately despatched to the house of Machir in the mountains of Gilead; soon the prince and some members of his family were brought to Jerusalem. The interview between him and David was most tender. David gave him a place at his own table, and bestowed upon him all the property of his grandfather. The whole family of Ziba, consisting of fifteen sons, were given to Mephibosheth to cultivate the land and to support an establishment suited to his rank. His home was now in Jerusalem, and he is a daily guest at the royal table.

## SLANDERED BY ZIBA.

About fourteen years pass and a terrible crisis in the life of David has come. Absalom has revolted, and the heart of David is well-nigh broken. Followed by all his household, David, with bare feet, as a sign of mourning, leaves Jerusalem. It is one of the saddest moments in his eventful life. The long procession is winding up the mount of Olives, and David takes, for the time, his last view of Jerusalem. His head is covered with his mantle, and he weeps as he walks. For a time he pauses to receive news of additional defection as well as of loyal devotion. Now the journey is resumed. The slopes of the eastern descent are reached. Ziba appears, having overtaken the king. He is now the steward of the lands given to Mephibosheth. He brings with him two asses saddled, and bearing loaves of bread, raisins, figs, and a skin of wine. Wonderfully acceptable to David in his trying circumstances were these gifts. The donor was surely most welcome, as he accompanies his gifts with many protestations of loyalty to the king. Though presented by Ziba, these gifts are the property of Mephibosheth. The events of the day have made David peculiarly sensitive. He asks why Mephibosheth is not here in person. Ziba has ready but deceitful answer; he intimates that his master is in Jerusalem striving to secure the throne from which David had

just been driven. For the moment, the story seemed to be plausible. David is touched by the apparent ingratitude of Mephibosheth. He rewards Ziba by giving him all the possessions which had belonged to his master, believing that Mephibosheth, like Absalom, had become a traitor. In hastily revoking the grant of land, and bestowing it on Ziba, David acted most unjustly toward Mephibosheth.

#### HIS CONGRATULATIONS TO DAVID.

Marvelous events in the life of David have occurred; but only those especially bearing on Mephibosheth are here mentioned. Absalom is now dead; public feeling is turned once more to David. His foes now seek his forgiveness, and his fortunes are again in the ascendant. Shimei is now a suppliant at David's feet, being now as craven as before he had been insolent. Who is this other suppliant who now approaches? He is none other than Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, David's most magnanimous friend. See him as he comes stumbling on his lame feet into the royal presence! Behold the reality of his sorrow and the signs of his mourning. His beard is untrimmed; his feet and clothes have not been washed, because of his sorrow, since the day that David left the city. Such signs of loyalty to the dethroned king might have caused Absalom to put Mephibosheth to death. He has now the

opportunity to tell his story to David, a story widely different from that told by Ziba. He gives David his sincere congratulations, and explains that, being lame, he could not, on foot, follow the king, and that Ziba designedly took from him his ass, which had been made ready to carry him to the king. In his helpless condition he had no alternative but to remain in Jerusalem. He further reminded the king that he had remained as a mourner from the day the king departed until the day he returned, his unkempt appearance being the confirmation of his words. Again David's heart was touched. He could not but believe the story told by Mephibosheth. David must have been sensible that he had committed a great wrong; but he failed fully to right the wrong he had committed.

#### MEPHIBOSHETH'S GENEROSITY.

A most noble quality on the part of Mephibosheth is now manifested. David partly revoked his order to give all the possessions to Ziba; but he showed considerable impatience toward Mephibosheth, saying rudely, "Why speakest thou any more of thy matters? I have said, thou and Ziba divide the land." Mephibosheth had been stripped of his possessions by the slanders of Ziba; but Ziba and his fifteen sons first secured the ear of David. Villainy, for the time, was successful, and modest merit suffered loss. In this transaction

no honor attaches to David because of his unfair treatment of the generous son of his early friend, the superb Jonathan.

The answer of Mephibosheth showed him to be the worthy son of the generous Jonathan: "Yea, let him take all, for as much as my lord, the king, is come again in peace unto his own house." Mephibosheth forgets all about the loss of his estate in his joy over the king's return; he will bear with patience all his private losses because the throne is exalted and the king is honored. David either feared Ziba, and so permits him to go away unpunished, or he was too indifferent in the midst of the joy of the hour to make careful inquiry. Probably he had a sense of weariness with the whole transaction, and he wished to maintain a conciliatory spirit on his return to the throne. It seems almost certain that Ziba was a rascal, although he has found apologists among scholars of various schools. Attention has been called to the fact that the name of Mephibosheth is not mentioned in the closing words of David's life; but eight years had elapsed between David's return to Jerusalem and his death. It is not at all improbable that Mephibosheth's death occurred before the death of David. David is careful not to include this Mephibosheth among those of the house of Saul, upon whom the Gibeonites inflicted savage vengeance. We may well believe that the suspicion and

sorrow caused by Ziba's treachery shortened the life of this unfortunate and long-suffering prince.

### SPIRITUAL LESSONS.

The name of Mephibosheth suggests an important spiritual lesson; it means the "exterminator of the shame," that is of idols or of Baal. Israel was long disposed to abandon God and to worship idols; so are heathen and nominal Christian nations disposed to this day. It is impossible to make any philosophical or religious distinction between the reverence paid to ikons in Russia, and the worship of idols in Japan, China, India, and other so-called heathen lands. The reverence paid to images by many devotees of the Roman Church is equally reprehensible. But the sin of idolatry may be committed by intelligent religionists of Protestant creeds. The first commandment sets before us a high standard: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." Whenever we place any person or object above God in our affection and devotion, we are guilty of idolatry. The Apostle Paul in writing to the Colossians makes covetousness idolatry. It is quite certain that covetousness is spiritual idolatry; it is giving to worldly wealth the honor due to God, and it is a sin into which many fall and which merits and receives God's severe reprobation. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Apostle John should say, "Little children, keep

yourselves from idols." All worship of images and pictures; all representations of God by paintings or statuary, and all giving of affection to other beings or objects above God are acts of idolatry. Each one of us should be a Mephibosheth, an exterminator in our own hearts, in our business lives, in our social circles, and in our churches of every form of idolatry.

The loyalty of Mephibosheth toward David the king, is worthy of commendation and imitation. He was loyal to the king even when David went weeping from his throne and his city; he was leal-hearted even when Absalom, the king's son, was traitorous. Let us be loyal in heart and life to Him who is David's Son and David's Lord. By all that is sacred in faith and beautiful in love, I summon you to be loyal to Jesus Christ. Go with him, even when with his cross he goes with weary feet and breaking heart without the city gate to Calvary. Count it all joy to bear his reproach, even to the death of the cross.

The generosity of Mephibosheth is most commendable. He is willing to give up to Ziba his rights as a landholder and become a dependent because of his joy that the king had come again in peace unto his own house. What to him were houses and lands compared to the king's safety and honor. Let us, in like manner, count it all joy to lay our gifts of service, gold, and love at the feet of our Master and Lord, our Redeemer

and King. Our highest joy should be experienced in seeing him establishing his church in all lands and claiming his throne in all hearts. The answer to the prayer which he has taught us, "Thy kingdom come," should give us foretastes of the bliss of heaven. The coming of this kingdom here and now inspires us to sing the first notes of the song that one day shall fill heaven's high dome with praise to Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords.



## VII

### THE GATEWARD WELL

*Text: And David longed, and said, Oh that one would give me drink of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate!—2 Sam. 23 : 15; also 1 Chron. 11 : 17.*

DAVID was now in an evil case; he was hard pressed by Saul. He was obliged to take refuge in the cave of Adullam. The site of this cave has not been fully identified. It seems, however, that the supposition which places it near Bethlehem possesses the greater probability. The Philistines, through whose ranks David's heroic "three chiefs" forced their way to secure water for David, were encamped near Bethlehem. We are obliged, therefore, to infer that the cave was near Bethlehem; this supposition is much more natural than that which would place it on the border of the plain of Philistia.

We are well assured that David's position was hazardous in the extreme, or the Philistines would not have been permitted to encamp in the valley of Rephaim, or to put a garrison in Bethlehem. One sympathizes with the heroic David, so honored of God and so hated of Saul, in the extremely trying circumstances in which he was placed.

He was really now an outlaw, supporting himself by forays on the neighboring Philistine districts. His place of retreat was known to his friends, and his fame soon gathered around him heroic men, and also others drawn by various motives. The arbitrary rule of Saul toward the people created discontent; there was also much indignation at Saul's treatment of the popular hero. David's aged parents, afraid of the vengeance of Saul, left Bethlehem and placed themselves under his care. This is the condition of David and his family when the words of the text were uttered.

#### DAVID'S DESIRE.

David was looking down upon scenes familiar since his boyhood; he suffered from the burning thirst of an Oriental summer day. We all know how strong is the desire for the scenes of our youth, and especially for the water of some favorite spring. David, in this spirit, expressed a longing for the draught of the water of the well of Bethlehem, which is by the gate. To this day there are pointed out three cisterns hewn in the rock which are called David's Well. Since the fifteenth century, tradition has associated this spot with the narrative of which the text is a part. Doubtless, David had often partaken of this water in his childhood; now its value seems greatly increased because of the trying conditions in which he is placed. The burning sun, the

excitement of the hour, and the contiguity of the well increased his thirst; all the memories of his boyhood connected with that well now crowded upon him. The people of the East are great connoisseurs in the taste of water. With the exception of coffee without sugar, many of them drink little else than water; they thus learn readily to distinguish the qualities of water obtained from different springs or wells. There are in Constantinople, for example, shops devoted exclusively to the sale of water, and the price of a glass varies according to the reputation of the spring from which it has been brought. It is an interesting fact that a steamer regularly plies between Constantinople and an island in the Sea of Marmora, seventy-five miles distant, in order to supply the Sultan's seraglio with the water of the famous spring. In addition to David's home yearnings, the excellence of the water itself would naturally lead him to desire a draught from the well of Bethlehem.

Some commentators have sharply criticized David for cherishing and expressing this desire; they have affirmed that this desire was puerile and altogether unbecoming a soldier and a prince. Others have apologized for David by saying that his wish was prompted by a patriotic spirit, and was equivalent to saying, "Would that we could drive the garrison of the Philistines out of Bethlehem and again drink from our own beloved

well." If this was David's thought the men about him did not catch his meaning. His desire was perfectly natural; and the expression of that desire, though somewhat hasty, was equally natural and not necessarily unbecoming.

#### DAVID'S BRAVE MEN.

David possessed remarkable powers of attraction. His magnetic spirit drew to him men who were genuine heroes. It is true, also, that the troubles of the time, the fear of creditors, and the spirit of adventure swelled the number of his adherents. Soon he was joined by his nephews, the sons of Zeruiah—Joab, Abishai, and Asahel. These were men with fiery souls, men who, under David's training were to write their names with luster on the pages of Jewish history. Even some of the old Canaanites cast in their lot with David; thus we have among his followers the names of Zelek the Ammonite, Uriah the Hittite, and Ithmah the Moabite; doubtless there were also representatives of many other of the old races. Every part of the land probably sent some daring spirits to form the band of heroes who stood around David.

When David expressed the desire for a draught from the well of Bethlehem, he probably had no thought that his wish could be gratified. He well knew that the Philistines had a garrison in Bethlehem, and that their camp was at Rephaim,

the valley of the Giants, near at hand. It was probably the time of barley reaping in April, and the enemy had come up to carry off the crops from this rich valley. To reach the well it was necessary to break through the enemy's line; and David well knew that this act was too risky to be rashly undertaken. Near him, while he uttered his wish for the water, were three of the "mighty men" who were ready to risk limb and life for the pleasure and honor of their prince. No sooner did he speak than they acted. Who were these heroic men? The names of two are given, Abishai and Benaiah; the other is not named, but doubtless his bravery was not less than that of those whose names are given. Away they rushed on their perilous journey. Either by artful approach or by bravely dashing through the lines they reached the well. Soon they are drawing the water clear and cool; soon they are on their return journey, and now they place before David the leathern skin containing the desired water. They wipe the sweat, and perhaps the blood, from their faces as they present the water to their anointed king, though now in poverty and exile.

#### DAVID'S SELF-DENIAL.

When David expressed his desire for the water from the well of Bethlehem, he did not wish that any of his men should risk their lives to gratify his desire; but these three men assumed that risk

in honor of their leader. They honored David more than they feared the Philistines. They were glad to defy the foe in order to show love for him. The water is now brought. As David looks upon it his heart is touched by the devotion of his men. He will not drink of the water, but pours it out as an offering unto the Lord. Hear his words as he asks: "Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives?" On the impressive monument to General Charles George Gordon, familiarly known as "Chinese Gordon," and also "Gordon Pasha," in St. Paul's, London, these words of David have a prominent place. On January 26, 1885, Gordon heroically fell at Khartum, through the treachery of Ferig Pasha, when the British army of relief was within two days' march of the place. The words of David receive additional significance when found on a monument to this brave soldier and Christian hero, cruelly neglected by the British government and dying as a martyr at Khartum.

David, thus self-denyingly, poured out the water before the Lord. In this act he showed his loving regard for the lives of his heroes; he also expressed his sorrow for the rash wish which might have cost the lives of these brave men. He also punished himself for entertaining and expressing a natural though foolish desire. He especially gave glory to God, considering that the water was too precious for his own use, and

that it was best employed when poured out as a drink-offering unto God.

Because this water was procured at the hazard of these men's lives, he considered it peculiarly sacred. In Arrian's "Life of Alexander," there is an account of a transaction very similar to the one here narrated. It is as follows: "When his army was greatly oppressed with heat and thirst, a soldier brought him a cup of water. He ordered it to be carried back, saying, 'I cannot bear to drink alone, while so many are in want; and this cup is too small to be divided among the whole. Give it to the children from whom you brought it.'" This account falls far short of the narrative concerning David and his men, both in its literary form and in its animating spirit. Compared with the biblical incident, this story is as moonlight unto sunlight. There is in English history a more striking and beautiful illustration of the principle involved than in the case of Alexander. Sir Philip Sidney was celebrated both as a writer and a soldier. He was in Paris at the time of the massacre of St. Bartholomew, but was safe because under the protection of the English embassy. As a courtier he had great influence with Queen Elizabeth. She appointed him governor of Flushing, and he took part in the war between the Dutch and the Spanish. At the battle of Zutphen in Gelderland, a horse was killed under him, and he received a musket shot

in the thigh from which, after great suffering, he died at Arnheim, October 7th, 1586. While he was carried from the field, he experienced the terrible thirst common to the wounded. A bottle of water was brought to him, but, just when he was about to drink, he observed the wistful looks of a soldier mortally wounded who lay near him. Taking the water untasted from his lips, he handed it to the suffering soldier, saying, "Thy necessity is greater than mine." In offering this water to his suffering fellow-soldier, he really made it an offering unto the Lord. No wonder that all England was filled with grief when the body of such a man was buried in the old cathedral of St. Paul's. He was one of the most finished types of English character, beautifully blending the honors of the knightly chevalier with the graces of the modern gentleman.

#### SPIRITUAL LESSONS.

This ancient story of Bethlehem abounds in important spiritual lessons. How precious is the very word Bethlehem! Here both David and Christ were born. A thousand years before the birth of the thorn-crowned King, Bethlehem gave Israel its royal psalmist and hero. What a cluster of names of lovely women is connected with Bethlehem—Rachel, Naomi, Ruth, Mary! But, evermore, the name Bethlehem will be associated with that name which is above every name.



David does not seem to have made much of Bethlehem in the days of his royal splendor; but he who was David's Son and David's Lord, has given Bethlehem a resistless charm and an unfading glory.

The incident we have been studying suggests the longing of the human soul for the living water. The human heart cries out for the living God. It is the glory of humanity that mere things can never satisfy immortal souls. A living man can be satisfied only with the living God. If you gave him half the world, his heart would cry out for the other half; if you gave him both halves, his deepest nature would still hunger for God. Men often misinterpret the inarticulate cry of their souls. They try to satisfy their souls with husks, with grain, with stocks and with bonds, but our spiritual natures need spiritual food, and they cannot be satisfied with anything earthly. Augustine was right when he said, "Thou, O God, hast made us for thyself; and our hearts are restless until they repose in thee." Pascal said, "Man is made for the infinite." Jean Paul Richter said, "We desire immortality, not as a reward of virtue, but as its continuance"; and Professor Clifford, after losing his religious faith, said, "We have seen the sun shine out of an empty heaven to light up a soulless world; we have felt with utter loneliness that the great Companion is dead." Men who have tasted that the Lord is gracious,

and who have wandered from the right way, constantly long in their deepest nature for this living water; they will never know true joy until they come back to their Father's house and heart.

The well of Bethlehem suggests the enormous cost by which our salvation was procured. In the life and death of Jesus Christ there was opened the true fountain for sin and uncleanness. In the cradle in Bethlehem's manger, God was humanized that man might be divinized. There God was humiliated that man might be forever exalted. There God's eternal love was manifested in unspeakable sacrifice. Christ, as the captain of our salvation, broke through the ranks of sin and hades to bring us the living water. His love fills all heaven with wonder, amazement, and adoration. From the fountain opened in the house of David there flows a stream of living water to refresh and redeem the whole race. For this manifestation of love, rocks and hills might well chant God's praise; for this boundless mercy angels and seraphs ought anew to sing the song of the celestial choir which rolled over the plains of Bethlehem the night the Christ was born.

This old story suggests the use we ought to make of the living water when it has become our possession. We ought to be willing to assume any risk to secure that water for ourselves and for our fellow-men. How sweet is the draught from Bethlehem's well in the conflicts of life!

How blessed are its draughts amid the dust and heat of some well-fought battle for truth and for God! We dare not keep these waters to ourselves. The living water will be in us as a well of water springing up into everlasting life; these waters will flow out from us to refresh homes, communities, and nations. The Nile never gives Egypt its richest blessing until the waters overflow their banks. As David's men risked limb and life to gratify his wish, so the followers of Christ must now risk their all to carry the living water to the ends of the earth. We best enjoy the blessings of salvation when we share them with the needy. If a man can keep his religion to himself, he has a religion not worth keeping. May we lay ourselves at the Master's feet, catching the inspiration of his unspeakable love! May we then rise in readiness to take our lives in our hands, and go to the ends of the earth with the water of life in response to the cry of the thirsty souls in heathen and in Christian lands who are saying, "Oh, that some one would give us drink of the water of which, if a man drink, he shall never thirst again, but which shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life!"

## VIII

### THE DITCHED VALLEY

*Text: And he said, Thus saith the Lord, Make this valley full of ditches.—2 Kings 3 : 16.*

WE have for our study on this occasion a narrative of remarkable interest. It is strikingly dramatic in its form and is equally instructive and religious in its teaching.

#### THE DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

It will help us much in understanding the story to have clearly in mind its dramatis personæ. Jehoram or Joram has a prominent place in the narrative. His name means exalted by Jehovah. He was the ninth king of Israel, having succeeded his elder brother, Ahaziah. He was the son of the wicked Ahab and the idolatrous Jezebel. He ascended the throne 896 B. C. and reigned twelve years. He deserves credit for having abandoned the idolatries of Baal, notwithstanding that his mother, who was still alive, gave them her support; but unfortunately he continued the worship of the golden calves, and thus perpetuated the sinful policy of Jeroboam. During the reign of Joram the revolt of the Moabites culminated. They

paid an enormously heavy tribute to Ahab, and, upon his death, they determined to assert their independence. But Joram took vigorous steps to suppress their revolt. During his war with Hazael, Joram was wounded. His death came in the suburbs of Ramoth Gilead by the hand of Jehu, his general. His body was thrown into the field of Naboth at Jezreel which his father had seized and, with his death, the house of the weak and wicked Ahab perished.

Jehoshaphat deserves our notice. His name means God judges. He was the fourteenth king of Judah and son of the pious Asa whom he succeeded 914 B. C. when he was thirty-five years old. He reigned twenty-five years. His character was marked by the religion of Jehovah, and by his opposition to every form of idolatry. He filled all the high offices with good men, and made provision for the religious education of the people. He was beguiled by Ahab into war with the Syrians; the union with Ahab is the chief error of his reign. He joined with Joram in a war against Moab. This alliance was excusable on political grounds, as the Moabites who were tributary to Israel if successful in their revolt, might lead the Edomites, who were tributary to Judah, to join with them in a common cause. Jehoshaphat not only united with Joram, but brought for his aid his tributary, the king of Edom, into the field.

The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, one of whose names was Edom. They settled in the mountains south of the Dead Sea. They finally became powerful. Their country was called in Hebrew, Edom, and in Greek, Idumea. The Moabites were the descendants of Moab, the son of Lot. They were thus kinsmen of Israel. Their land lay east and southeast of the Dead Sea, and chiefly south of the River Arnon. They were gross idolaters, worshiping Chemosh and Baal-Peor with obscene rites and often with human sacrifices. The Jewish prophets uttered severe threatenings against these hereditary enemies of God and the Jewish people. These prophecies were terribly fulfilled. To-day desolation broods over the mountains of Moab. Ruins of tombs, cisterns, and temples abound. Mesha was their king at the time of the occurrence of the events we are studying. He possessed immense flocks and herds and from them derived his chief wealth. In our story on this occasion, we shall see that he sacrificed his own son to propitiate the gods of his country.

The great character in our history on this occasion is the Prophet Elisha, whose name means God saves. He had been the servant, and he became the successor of the heroic Elijah. He was a native of Abel-Meholah, where he was plowing when Elijah dramatically called him to the office of prophet. We shall later see that his work

was in striking contrast to that of Elijah. Elijah was the whirlwind; but Elisha was the still small voice. Elijah broke the fallow ground; and Elisha garnered the golden harvest.

#### THE HELPLESS ARMIES.

We have already seen that the Moabites revolted from the king of Israel, and that Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, with his tributary, the king of Edom, made an alliance with Joram to subdue the rebellious Moabites. The confederates marched for seven days through the wilderness of Edom and, during all this period, the army suffered much for want of water. It was the advice of Jehoshaphat that the allies should not go by the nearest way over Jordan, but through the wilderness of Edom; they would thus the more easily take the king of Edom with them as an additional ally. When the three armies came in sight of the Moabites, these allies were parched with thirst. They are reduced to a fearful extremity. God can instantly make helpless the struggle of armies simply for the want of water. In vain might these allied kings sit in solemn council; in vain might they summon their soothsayers; in vain were their shields and their banners. Without water they were helpless as babes in a tornado. Their distress was unspeakably great. They were virtually in the same wilderness in which their ancestors long before had

suffered. Joram pitifully laments the present distress; but he wickedly charges God with the responsibility for the exigence in which they are placed. He said, "The Lord hath called these three kings together to deliver them into the hand of Moab." His statement was utterly false; it was he himself who called the kings together. When our way is prosperous, we are all ready to take the credit to ourselves; but when our way is disastrous, we are ready to put the responsibility upon God.

This was a trying experience with these allied armies. For a time, not even Jehoshaphat sought divine help; but when he came to his nobler self, he asked, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord, that we may inquire of the Lord by him?" Afflictions are a blessing when they drive us to God. When tossed in a sea of troubles, we should welcome the wave that casts us upon the rock. The answer comes to Jehoshaphat from one of the servants of the king of Israel that, "here is Elisha, the son of Shaphat, who poured water on the hands of Elijah." There is hope for them when they begin to call for God. A dramatic scene now presents itself—three kings are now seeking the presence and help of the modest Elisha! Behold them at the door of his tent! Up to this time they paid him no respect whatever. He comes before them and us simply as the servant who performed menial offices for Elijah, but,



as the prophet of Jehovah, he is mightier than the allied kings. He entered the camp as a volunteer in the service of his country and his God, and the kings did not choose him as chaplain nor, apparently, did they in any way recognize his presence. They are glad now to be suppliants before his tent. He appears, for the first time in his history, stepping out face to face with kings; we see him as the representative of God and of the entire nation.

His appearance is dignified and heroic; he is the worthy successor of Elijah. In him patriotism and religion beautifully blend. A fine picture is this, the suppliant kings before the noble Elisha! Hear Elisha's cutting question to the king of Israel, "What have I to do with thee?" Hear his stinging command to this king, "Get thee to the prophets of thy father and to the prophets of thy mother!" It is as if the prophet had said to the king, "What answer can you expect from me? You have been a traitor to God; go to the prophets of your idolatrous mother and the idols of your weak father. These you supported in your prosperity; go to them now in your adversity!" There was haughty scorn in the prophet's face; there was biting sarcasm in his voice. He looked beneath the partial reformation of Joram and saw the hollowness of its pretensions. He saw that although Joram had rejected the image of Baal, the prophets of this abominable idol he still honored;

perhaps, indeed, some of these prophets were at that moment in the camp. The righteous indignation of Elisha flashes forth. He can scarcely control his just wrath. Joram accepts his rebuke, conscious of the need of his army and of the powerlessness of the prophets of Baal.

The cutting words of Elisha are spoken, and for the sake of Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, he will intercede with Jehovah. It is of vast importance to us to have for our friends those who are the friends of God. Many of our choicest blessings come to us vicariously. We are indebted more than we shall ever know to others for many of the commonest blessings of this life. Perhaps the world itself is in its existence to-day because of the earnest prayers and righteous acts of God's saints. The presence of even ten righteous men in Sodom would have saved the city from destruction.

Elisha now prepares himself to receive instructions from God. Evidently his interview with Joram, the son of Ahab and Jezebel, had greatly perturbed the mind of the prophet. His reply to this king was accompanied by no small degree of mental and spiritual excitation. We know that the prophets often received and delivered their messages with the aid of music. Serenity of spirit is conducive to hearing and speaking God's word wisely. Elisha desired the presence of a minstrel, some holy songster, some Asaph or Heman, who

should sing in softest and sweetest strains one of the songs of Zion.

We are reminded, at this point, of Luther's great testimony to the value of music. He says: "One of the finest and noblest gifts of God is music. This is very hostile to Satan, and with it we may drive off many temptations and evil thoughts. . . . After theology, I give the next place and highest honor to music. . . . It has often aroused and moved me, so that I have won a desire to preach. . . . I have always loved music. He who is master of this art is always well disposed and ready for anything which may arise. Music must necessarily be retained in the schools. A schoolmaster must be able to sing. . . . We ought not to ordain young men to the office of preacher if they have not trained themselves and practised (singing) in the schools." Thus spoke the gigantic mind and heroic soul of the immortal Martin Luther. Not unlike Luther's thought are the words of Addison:

Music religious heat inspires,  
It wakes the soul and lifts it high,  
And wings it with sublime desires,  
And fits it to bespeak the Deity.

The minstrel came in response to the request of Elisha; then the power of God came down upon the prophet. His soul was strung like a harp and the hand of God swept its strings. His

whole being was responsive to the touch of God. Alike as prophet of God and patriot in Israel, he lifted up his voice. His storm-tossed passions are hushed, and nobly does he proclaim the will of Jehovah. Oh, the blessedness of having as our friend one who is the friend of God! Listen to the inspired voice of Elisha, which is the voice of Jehovah, "Make this valley full of ditches." It is as if he had said, "Water will soon come in abundance. Prepare for its coming; make trenches in this valley. They who expect great blessings from God must make great preparations for their coming." By prayer Elijah brought water from the clouds; from sources unknown to us Elisha brings water for the parched soldiers. Though the people might not see rain, yet the water would come for themselves and for their cattle.

The armies that were ready to perish were relieved. At the time of the morning sacrifice, water came by the way of Edom. Perhaps this was not, in the strict sense, a miracle. The abundance of water came in a natural way by a sudden flood of rain at a distance. Through some watercourse which had long been empty the stream now flowed. A strange optical illusion followed. Rising early in the morning the Moabites saw the water, on which the sun was shining, and it appeared red as blood. They immediately came to the conclusion that the confederate kings had

smitten one another, and that their foes were thus slain. The cry then rang out, "Moab to the spoil!" Forward with high hope the Moabites dashed. Instantly the armies of the allies rose up and smote the self-deceived Moabites. God gave the confederates both water and victory. The Israelites pursued the fleeing Moabites, beating down their cities, stopping their wells, and destroying their fields. Mesha, the king of Moab, made a brave effort at resistance; with seven hundred choice men he made a sally against the king of Edom, but he was obliged to retire in utter defeat. To secure the favor of his god, Chemosh, he offered on the altar of that demon his eldest son, who was to have reigned in his father's stead. He did this upon the wall of the city partly to terrify the besiegers. His odious and wicked act aroused great indignation against the Israelites. Fearing lest they should bring part of the punishment of this abominable act upon themselves, they raised the siege and returned to their own land, despoiling the territory of Moab as they went.

#### THE GREAT SPIRITUAL LESSON.

In the fertile soil of this narrative, spiritual lessons spring up abundantly. At this time, however, attention is confined, for the most part, to one great lesson. If we are to receive great blessings from God, we must make great preparation. We are as dependent upon God for living water, for

the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit, as these allied armies were for natural water. Without the presence and power of God, all our efforts are unavailing. Human learning and eloquence can never take the place of the Spirit's presence and power. To receive the Holy Spirit, we must make trenches in our hearts, homes, and churches. When the time comes for the Nile to overflow its banks, the Egyptians prepare their canals and reservoirs. God cannot consistently give us blessings for which we are not prepared by cherishing earnest desires and making appropriate efforts. We honor God by expecting great things from him. The command of God through Elisha was that the valley should be made full of ditches; one ditch was not sufficient. Giving does not impoverish God; withholding does not enrich God. Preparation often implies the utmost activity. Making ditches is severe toil. God never puts a premium on human laziness. When we work most, God works best with us. If only Paul plants and Apollos waters, it is certain that God will give the increase.

Earnest prayer must be associated with laborious toil. Do you want a blessing from God? Would you have your heart, your home, your church refreshed? Then dig your ditch to-day; wait not for to-morrow. Procrastination is not only the thief of time, but is the destroyer of souls. Are we to have a revival in our Sunday-school,

let every teacher begin the laborious and prayerful work of ditch-making. Are we to have conversions in our own homes, then let trenches be dug in every room and in every heart. God is not straitened in himself, but because of our trenchless lives. Let us expect great things from God and do great things for God. Out of his abundant fulness he will give us blessings which will overflow our lives as does the glorious Nile its banks. Let the churches of America dig great trenches from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and from the Lakes to the Gulf. Then shall great waves of revival blessing roll over the continent.

Arise, O ye workmen of God, and dig great trenches in Japan, China, in India, and throughout the whole world. Is not the set time to favor Zion at hand? Have not the churches waited quite too long? Are not the people and the armies of the living God perishing for the water of life? If we listen, we shall hear the voice of God saying, "Make this valley full of ditches." When we have thus prepared for God, he will come in mighty power and great glory. He will give us more than our faith dare expect. He will deliver into our hands the Moabites of intemperance, of lawlessness, and of atheism. Our God is mightier than all the might of evil. All the resources of the universe are at his command. The day will dawn when all the kings of the earth will bow at the feet of Jesus Christ as the king

of Israel, the king of Judah, and the king of Edom came in humble suppliance to the prophet Elisha. Yea, all kings of every tribe, tongue, and nation, shall fall down before Jesus Christ and his name shall be glorious and blessed forever, and the whole earth shall be filled with his glory. Amen and amen!



## IX

### THE HEROIC LION-KILLER

*Text: Also he (Benaiah) went down and slew a lion in a pit in a snowy-day.—I Chron. II : 22.*

WE have in this connection a catalogue of David's honorable and heroic men. One of the evidences of greatness on the part of any man is his ability to surround himself by great men. Mr. Andrew Carnegie has recently said that the explanation of his success is found in the fact that he surrounded himself by men greater than himself. David was a man of remarkable attractiveness; the magnetism of his charming personality bound men to him in bonds stronger than hooks of steel. His success was due, however, not simply to the mighty men around him, but to the almighty God above him and his men.

Brave men gathered about him when he was anointed king over Israel. They declared that their hands should not leave their swords until the king had won his own. Most stirring were their words: "Thine are we, and on thy side, thou son of Jesse." They were willing to live and to die for their king. The bravery and loyalty of these men stir our blood to this day; they have power

still to evoke our most knightly chivalry and to arouse our most loyal enthusiasm. Noble men were they all; but, as one star differs from another star in glory, so there were degrees of honor among these heroic life-guards of the king. Some of them stood in advance of the rest; they had made themselves especially conspicuous by deeds of exceeding daring and of wonderful heroism. Within the circle of these brave men there were six who stood head and shoulders above their brethren, and again these six were divided into trios according to their bravery. The first three who had performed greatest exploits were Adino, Eleazar, and Shammah. The next brave triumvirate attained not to the rank of the first triumvirate; still they won distinguished honor. Of this second triumvirate the names of only two are given, Abishai and Benaiah. These men attended David when he hid in the cave of Adullam. They heroically strove to gratify David's wish for a draught of water from the well of Bethlehem. On this occasion mention is made especially of Benaiah. He was the son of Jehoiada, the chief priest, and, therefore, of the tribe of Levi. He was placed by David over his body-guard of Cherethites and Pelethites. His exploits were celebrated by all the soldiers of Israel. Two Moabitish champions he overcame; an Egyptian giant he slew with his own spear; and, as our text informs us, he descended into a pit, or exhausted cistern, on

a snowy day and there slew a lion. He occupied a middle position between the first three of the Gibborim, or "mighty men," and the thirty "valiant men of the armies." It is interesting to learn that he remained faithful to Solomon when Adonijah made his attempt on the crown; and after the death of Adonijah and Joab, Benaiah was raised by Solomon to the position formerly occupied by Joab, commander-in-chief of the army.

Let us rise to a higher level than that reached by the brave men who stood about David. It is both our privilege and our duty to say, "Thine are we, Jesus, true son of Jesse, and on thy side shall we stand until thou art crowned King of glory and Lord over all." All Christ's men are noble; but among them also there are varieties of gifts. There is no dead level in work and worth in the kingdom of God, there is opportunity for the humblest, as truly as for the noblest talents. David's brave men fought the battles, but God won the victories, and to him they gave the glory. The same law still holds in the church of God. These principles will be illustrated as we proceed to discuss the characteristics of Benaiah, the heroic lion-killer.

#### A GREAT DEED PERFORMED.

We are told in the text that Benaiah slew a lion. This was an honorable achievement in that day, and it is deemed a mark of skill and

bravery even in our day. Benaiah was no coward; he dared attack a fierce foe. He was a virile fighter and a mettlesome hunter; a very Nimrod, "a mighty hunter before the Lord," was Benaiah. He cared not to chase the timid deer, nor to pursue the flying fox. His ambition reached out after sport of a high order; he determined to bag big game. We all have to fight lions of some sort.

A beautiful expression is this, "A valiant man." This is exactly the kind of man the church needs to-day, both in pulpit and in pew. This is no time for cowardice, indifference, or timidity. The church needs men with power of initiative to devise means of attacking evil, and ability to execute their plans when evil is attacked. Never were brave men more in demand than at this hour; never could brave men achieve sublimer results than at this hour. The church longs for men capable of performing deeds of valor; men who can endure hardness in the heroic battle of daily life. The church is ready to crown such men with immortal honor.

We all have to fight at some time in life the lion of natural infirmity. This infirmity is one thing in one man and another thing in another man, but it is a very real thing in all men. Selfishness, covetousness, and a hasty temper, are often fierce lions which we must control, or by them be controlled. Very striking is the language

of the writer to the Hebrews when he exhorts us to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset. Not all weights are sins, but all sins are certain to become weights as we run the Christian race. The word translated "easily beset" does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament; nor is it elsewhere found in all Greek literature. This fact makes its interpretation difficult. The original word literally means "standing well around"; or "the well-circumstanced sin." The allusion to the long Oriental garments which naturally wound themselves around their wearers is quite evident. The runner naturally removed garments which would hinder him in walking and running. This is the sin which clings to us as an inner propensity, and so entangles us and impedes our course. Those sins to which we are exposed by natural temperament belong to this class. The sins in which men indulged before they became Christians belong to the same category. The man who had been intemperate is in special danger from that quarter; so is the man who had been skeptical, avaricious, and sensual. He is certain to be attacked by these sins after he has entered upon the Christian race. There is also a class of sins which may be called professional—sins to which men are exposed by their business relations and their professional engagements. Men who are engaged in public duties as politicians are peculiarly exposed to danger

at all these points. There are sins also which become well circustanced as arising from peculiar weakness inherent in the character of men. Every man has his weak point, if, indeed, he be not weak all over. No chain is stronger than its weakest link; no bow than its thinnest point. Fierce lions attack us at the points where our defense is weakest. In every man's life there are superb opportunities for heroism. Now we are attacked by some little fox that spoils the vines which bear sweetest fruit; and now by some fierce lion that leaps upon us to destroy both soul and body for time and eternity.

Sometimes the lion we have to fight consists of some difficult work we have to perform. The painful task cannot be evaded; it stands ever before us asserting its claim. There is a tremendous oughtness in every man's life; rightness and oughtness make upon us their imepriial demands. A solemn and sublime word is "duty." What does this word really mean? We know that it used to be spelled *ducty*; duty is, therefore, what is due to myself, to my neighbor, and to God; it is that which one is bound by natural, legal, and moral obligation to perform. These difficult duties in life must be discharged. They stand directly in our path; they await our coming; they challenge our courage. Shall we attempt the difficult task, or shall we be cowards and attempt to escape from our plain obligations? It is the

slothful man who saith, "There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." There is, indeed, a lion without, but if we march heroically to the performance of duty, there will be a dead lion in the streets, and we shall be the brave victors.

All who have achieved great things for God have encountered and vanquished the lions in their path. Behold the apostles going out on their mission! How shall they win a rebellious world to God? They have no armies, no bank accounts, no social influence; their undertaking seems ludicrous in the extreme. They must encounter the hatred of the Jews and the sneers of the Gentiles. Prisons, chains, racks, crosses, and also crowns, are to be their reward. Heroically they went forth on their great mission. They won the victory in their perilous fight. Hoary superstitions disappeared; walls of opposition crumbled, and truth triumphed. The Apostle Paul has marched through the ages, while Roman emperors have gone down into silence and death. William Carey, at whom Sidney Smith sneered as "the consecrated cobbler," became one of the greatest of Oriental scholars, and did more in India for Britain and for God than did any British soldier or Anglican bishop. Judson won the crown of unfading honor among men, and secured the plaudits of saints and angels because he bravely did his duty, and heroically overcame the lions in his path. In recent days, martyred missionaries in

China repeat the heroisms of past generations. The days of heroism are here and now.

It is beautiful to observe the harmony between apparently irreconcilable qualities in the character of our Lord; he is at once the Lamb of God and the Lion of the tribe of Judah. In him the qualities of the lion and the lamb graciously blend. The bravest are evermore the tenderest. Wilberforce, Howard, Lincoln, and Spurgeon, in their varied walks in life, illustrate this gracious blending of apparently opposite qualities. Let us nobly do our duty, and thus slay our lion.

#### A GREAT DUTY PERFORMED IN A DIFFICULT PLACE.

Benaiah slew his lion in a pit. This pit may have been an exhausted cistern, or it may have been dug as a trap for the lion. Pits are dug as traps for lions at this day at Singapore. Hunting lions, both for profit and for protection, is a favorite sport in this province of the Straits Settlements. We seldom realize how many lives are lost annually in India from the poison of serpents, and the attacks of ferocious beasts. In a recent year, over seventeen thousand died from the poison of serpents and over eight hundred were killed by tigers.

Benaiah had his encounter with a lion in a small place. He thus had no opportunity for maneuvering; he could not employ intrigue or stratagem in any effective way. There was absolutely



no chance for artifice or dodging of any sort. The hot breath of the lion was on his cheek; he must fight or die instantly. He might fight and die eventually, but fight he must, or at once abandon all hope. Many of our fiercest conflicts are in tight places. This truth every business man knows only too well. He is often in great financial and other straits. He must fight with the foe pressing hard upon him. There is no chance for escape. The only alternatives are to fight or to die; perhaps death is inevitable in any case, but the brave man will do his level best, however great the odds against him may be.

It was a hand-to-hand fight there in the pit. No weapon of long range could be used. It is a suggestive remark of Oliver Wendell Holmes, in "The Autocrat of the Breakfast-table," that "the race that shortens its weapons lengthens its boundaries"; and then he adds that, "It was the Polish lance that left Poland at last with nothing of her own to bound." He asks what business had Sarmatia to be fighting for liberty with a fifteen-foot pole between her hands and the breasts of her enemies? Had she held the short sword of the Romans, she might have preserved her life and liberty; but her long weapons made her defeat inevitable. We cannot fight Satan at long range. We must come close to men also if we are to win them to God. It is easy to denounce sin and sinners in the pulpit, but it is quite an-

other thing to come close to men and say to them with blended authority and affection, "Ye are the men." We may often put more of the gospel into a hearty hand-shake than into ten sermons. We must lengthen the sword of the Spirit by adding a step to it, as the old Roman advised his son to do, even with the Roman sword, when fighting for the honor of Rome.

Benaiah had to fight to the death; he must kill that lion, or be killed by that lion. It was a terrific conflict; this he knew right well from the moment that he and the lion met in that pit. Similar conflicts are still inevitable. Temptations fierce leap upon us; we must destroy or be destroyed. Fighting with wild beasts is as real with us to-day as it was with the apostle at Ephesus. Never was heroism more needed than now; never was valor more demanded than to-day. Like the brave Highlander who could play on his pipes a march or a charge, but, when asked by the French officer who had captured him, to play a retreat, replied, "I canna, for I never learned that," we must never retreat from Satan, but fight to the death. In so fighting we shall be able eventually to shout, "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

#### A VICTORY WON IN UNFAVORABLE CONDITIONS.

Other men as well as Benaiah have killed lions. Are we fully justified in giving him the title, "The

Heroic Lion-Killer"? Has the word "heroic" a rightful place in this connection? Perhaps it may be partially justified by the fact that he killed the lion in a pit; but it is now more fully justified by the additional statement that he slew the lion in a pit "on a snowy day." David, when he kept his father's sheep, slew both a lion and a bear that had carried off a lamb from his father's flock; but the slaying of these wild beasts did not occur in a pit on a snowy day. When a young lion roared against Samson, under the power of the Spirit of the Lord he rent this lion as he would have rent a kid; but the fight did not occur in a pit on a snowy day. Benaiah deserves his title of heroic; he slew the lion in specially unfavorable conditions. On a snowy day the lion would be peculiarly fierce, and Benaiah's hands would be benumbed by cold, and so would be less supple than in ordinary conditions. The ground also would be slippery, and so standing would be insecure. Everything was against him. It was a terrific fight in a most unfavorable environment. He well deserves his title of heroic.

Many of the men who have attained to greatest fame were once boys who had no chance. What chance had Thomas Carlyle and Hugh Miller as stone masons? What chance had Faraday as the son of a blacksmith? What chance had Humphry Davy as an apprentice to an apothecary? What chance had Kepler as a waiter in a German

hotel? What chance had Copernicus as the son of a Polish baker? What chance had Lincoln as a rail-splitter, or Garfield as the driver of a canal horse? When one thinks of the disadvantages of Elihu Burritt, one appreciates what Edward Everett said of him: "It is enough to make one who has had good opportunities for education hang his head in shame." Let our young men stop whining because of their disadvantages, and begin fighting in dead earnest. Luck is a fool; pluck is the hero. Let us catch the meaning of Shakespeare's words when he reminds us that the fault is not in our stars, but in ourselves that we are underlings.

We must often work in the church and in the world with a cold heart. Think of the fearful odds against which Sir Walter Scott struggled when he wrote himself into immortality. Dickens often wrote scores of pages with a cold heart and a stiff hand, and without outward inspiration. He worked himself into the fever of passion and the joy of enthusiasm in his writing. So must we work in our church service. Often the church will be as cold as an Arctic wind can make it. Often its atmosphere will be far below zero. Often there will be no appreciation of Christian work or workers. Let us not wait for warmth in others, but see to it that we are warm in ourselves. Sometimes it will seem as if God were dead; but let us be assured that he lives, reigns,

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and loves. We want Benaiahs in all the churches—men who can slay lions in pits on snowy days.

Whence came his courageous spirit? He kept near David, and caught his spirit of true heroism. We must keep near to Jesus Christ who is David's Son and David's Lord. At his rebuke Satan shrank in utter defeat. In his strength we shall be more than conquerors over Satan who, "as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour."

## X

### THE MOABITE WASHPOT

*Text: Moab is my washpot.—Ps. 60 : 8.*

THE title to this psalm is long and enigmatical. Most commentators are perplexed by the apparent contradiction between the title and the contents of the earlier part of the psalm. It appears to have been written in honor of Joab's victory over the Edomites in the valley of Salt, although it is not at all certain to what valley reference is made. In 2 Sam., eighth chapter, there is a brief record of this war; in that war the victory is attributed to David, and in the parallel place, in 1 Chron. 18 : 12, the victory is said to have been achieved by Abishai. There is, however, really no contradiction between the two statements. We speak of the conquests of Napoleon when we have in mind victories won by the armies which he commanded, and the brave generals placed over these armies. The victory commemorated in the psalm was really one of the conquests of David, whatever officer may have served under him. Probably the triumph was secured by the joint action of the forces under Joab and his brother Abishai.

Probably while David was engaged in his Syrian campaign, the Edomites, taking advantage of his absence, invaded Palestine. In the battle, which was fought near the southern extremity of the Dead Sea, the Edomites were defeated with great slaughter, and they never recovered from the blow inflicted. Joab almost exterminated the male population, and he garrisoned their chief city with Hebrew troops. Greater victories for David followed, and this psalm seems to have been written during the interval between the first battles and the final subjugation.

The opening of the psalm is a wail of sorrow; then follows a pæan of victory. It is difficult to account for the lamentation in the first three verses. Some have even supposed that the psalm does not belong to the age of David, but this supposition is more difficult of explanation than the usual explanation regarding the psalm's authorship.

With the fourth verse of the psalm we strike a note of hope and joy; in the sixth verse that note is still more hopeful and joyful. There it is affirmed that God had spoken in his holiness and had promised the land of Canaan as the possession of the seed of Abraham. In the seventh verse it is affirmed that dominion for Israel is already extended over Gilead, Manasseh, Ephraim, and Judah. Thus dominion over the country on both sides of the Jordan was already secured. The

eighth verse implies that Moab was already subjugated, and that Edom, or Idumea, would soon be subdued. This latter country David was anxious to possess; its acquisition was necessary to the fulfilment of the promise concerning the chosen territory. Here the author affirms that "over Edom will I cast out my shoe." This land was inhabited by the descendants of Esau who bore old grudges against the Israelites. It is now affirmed that they will be reduced to utter subjection. David speaks as representing Israel, and Israel really represents God. The reference to Edom is suggestive of the contempt in which that country is held. Casting the shoe was a symbol of occupancy; in the Middle Ages that idea was represented by throwing down a glove; at other times it was symbolized by setting up a standard, exalting the cross, or erecting a building or a fort. But, in the passage before us, the utmost contempt is implied. The idea is that David would put his foot on their neck, or that he would cast his shoe to Edom as a man when about to bathe his feet, throws his shoes to a slave that the shoes may be cleaned and made ready for his use when next he wishes to put them on. The psalmist speaks so contemptuously of Edom, that it is not necessary for him to draw his sword; he has simply to throw his sandal in order to show his mastery.

The reference to Moab is still more contemptuous. The Moabites were the descendants of



Moab, the son of Lot. They inhabited a region of country on the east of the Dead Sea, and which extended as far north as the River Arnon. The meaning of the psalmist in calling Moab his washpot is that God would reduce Moab to the lowest condition of servitude, to the meanest form of slavery. Once Moab defiled Israel, according to the counsel of Balaam, the son of Beor; now Moab will be the washpot for those whom she desired to pollute. In the Orient, sandals and not shoes are or were the usual covering of the feet. While walking the feet become greatly soiled. When the end of the journey is reached the traveler removes his sandals, holds his foot over a vessel, and from an ewer water is poured upon the foot; this water, greatly defiled, falls into the basin held beneath the feet. Naturally menials usually performed this service. No vessel was more dishonorable than the one into which this defiled water fell. Moab is thus likened to the humblest household utensil. The former foe is now helpless in the power of the conqueror. Humiliation could not go farther. We have in Aristophanes this statement: "You don't appear to be in your right senses, who make a washpot of me in the presence of many men."

#### NATIONS MADE WASHPOTS.

In God's providence, nations which will not obey the divine law will be humiliated as was

Moab. God still lives and reigns. His law sweeps through the centuries ; it is universal as gravitation and eternal as God himself. Neither man nor nation can escape from God's eternal justice. The history of nations is a commentary on the Ten Commandments. Spain to-day is a signal example of God's application of eternal law to human conduct. The Spanish Inquisition is largely responsible for Spain's illiteracy, bigotry, and poverty to-day. In Seville, January 2, 1481, the Spanish Inquisition, formally constituted by papal bull, published its first mandate. The alert and pitiless friar, Thomas de Torquemada, was the first inquisitor-general. The cruelties of the Inquisition no language can exaggerate ; confiscation, torture, and death were the inevitable penalties. The ingenuity of the inquisitors in devising new methods of torture was worthy of Satan in his most hadesian spirit. On the day of the *auto da fé* cathedral bells rang, and the whole city was aroused ; the condemned marched to their death under every conceivable form of stigma. Llorente places the number of victims during the eighteen years of Torquemada's rule as ten thousand two hundred and twenty burnt, six thousand eight hundred and sixty burnt in effigy as absent or dead, and ninety-seven thousand three hundred and twenty-one as suffering penalties less than that of death. The Inquisition left Spain intellectually and morally in the Middle Ages. The Inquisition cost Spain

the Netherlands. On the blood-soaked soil of heroic Holland the once invincible Spanish legions were broken in battle by men who knew how to die rather than be slaves of Spain and victims of the Inquisition. The Inquisition in Spain was the insatiable Moloch in that wretched and priest-ridden land.

On the twenty-fifth of October, 1555, in the great hall of the palace at Brussels, Charles Fifth abdicated in favor of his brutal son, Philip Second. The occasion was one of the most brilliant known in history. The splendor of ecclesiastical robes and the glitter of military uniforms vied with each other in that historic hall. Spain was then mistress of half the world. The edicts and the Inquisition were the gifts of Charles to the Netherlands; his hand planted that diabolical institution on the sea-drenched soil of that heroic country. To-day Spain has lost all her territories, won and for a time held by civil cruelties and ecclesiastical tyrannies.

The banishment of the Jews from Spain was accompanied by acts almost as Satanic as those of the Inquisition itself; indeed, this act was another of the persecution of the Inquisition. For a long period the condition of the Jews in Spain was favorable; while the Arab and the Moor ruled in the peninsula, the Jew was on terms of equality with his Mohammedan masters. But when the Roman Church came into power, and especially

when in 1492 Ferdinand and Isabella issued an edict for the expulsion within four months of all Jews who refused to become Christians, their sufferings were indescribably great. For seven centuries they had lived in Spain; this land was their home. Agony drove Jewish mothers into madness; with their own hands they destroyed their children to prevent them from falling into the hands of their persecutors. In the judgment of intelligent nations, Spain had degraded herself to the level of Moab, the washpot of Israel.

#### FRANCE HUMILIATED.

France by her massacre of the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Day, August 24-25, 1572, merited and received the contempt of all truly civilized nations. The subsequent celebrations of the horrors of that awful day were as revolting as the massacre itself. Rome and Madrid gave boisterous expression to their joy. Pope Gregory and his cardinals, amid the booming of cannon, offered public thanksgiving to God for the destruction of Protestants. A medal commemorated the event, and a painting of the massacre adorned the walls of the Vatican. But in Germany the name of Frenchman was held in abhorrence. In Scotland, Knox denounced the deed with the boldness of a Hebrew prophet. In England, Queen Elizabeth refused to recognize the French ambassador, and the ladies of the court were robed

in deepest mourning. Awful were the dying agonies of Charles the Ninth while blood oozed from every pore in his body. France, for the time being, was despised among the nations. On October 22, 1685, the famous Edict of Nantes was revoked, and the noblest sons and daughters of France were driven from the land they loved. Perhaps not fewer than two hundred and twenty-five thousand quitted the kingdom. England, America, Germany, Switzerland, and Holland were greatly enriched by this wholesale proscription of Frenchmen, while France was made unspeakably poor. Many of the refugees of this cruel expulsion and their descendants attained to honorable positions in various countries; their names stand high on the honor rolls of Holland, Great Britain, and America. Some of them also arose to plague the Roman Church for her heathen cruelty in their expulsion. They became efficient supporters of William of Orange in the struggles which finally drove the Stuarts from the throne. In Ireland these refugees rallied around the Protestant standard. Marshal Schonberg, a refugee, led the brave troops at the historic battle of the Boyne. When William was established in London and diplomatic relations with the French ambassador were broken and he was commanded to leave the kingdom within twenty-four hours, a refugee, De l'Estang, gave him notice of his dismissal. Another refugee, St. Leger, escorted him

to Dover. These refugees became leaders of the commercial classes, enriching all Protestant countries and impoverishing France. The manufactures introduced into England alone deprived France, it is affirmed, of an annual return of \$10,000,000.

The years pass and the same arquebus with which Charles Ninth fired upon the Huguenots, on St. Bartholomew's awful night, was pointed by the daring Mirabeau at the throne of France. The years again pass. Who are these triumphant German officers and soldiers who victoriously ride through the streets of Paris and who, with the brave old kaiser, receive the submission of France at the famous and sumptuous Galerie des Glaces in Versailles? In this historic room, whose paintings are by Charles Lebrun, William First was crowned Emperor of Germany in 1871. These soldiers and officers so gallantly marching are in part the descendants of the despised, persecuted, and expatriated Huguenots. France might have retained possession of Canada as New France if the Roman Church had permitted these Huguenots to find homes in that colony; but no Protestant was permitted to live on that soil. The blood of these brave Huguenots dyed the snow and fattened the soil of Canada, and France lost a magnificent empire which she nearly won.

France is fighting the same old battle to-day, the battle of civil liberty against ecclesiastical tyranny.

The republic is, at this moment, shaken from center to circumference by the desire of the noblest Frenchmen to resent and resist the encroachments of priestly tyranny, and secure separation between Church and State. Submission to the Roman Church has often brought France down to the level of Moab; but she is now rising under the inspiration of civil and religious liberty to free herself from her ancient bonds and to take her place as a queen among the progressive nations of the earth. Under the Roman Church France was reduced to the level of Moab.

Russia, by her awful tyranny on the one side and her Satanic anarchy on the other side, has lost her high place among the nations, and is nearing the degradation reached by Moab. In so far as mob law prevails in our own beloved land, a similar degradation is ours. Lawlessness is not a sectional but a national sin. Mob law is born of hades; anarchy is a child of Satan. Mob law has no brains wisely to think, no heart tenderly to feel, and no conscience rightly to act. Buddhists in Japan and Hindus in India gave me many times of humiliation by their criticisms of lynchings in America. They said, in substance, "Americans would better keep their missionaries at home to teach American savages the first principles of civilization and humanity, than to send missionaries to Japan and India. America is the only country to-day on the globe where men are burned

alive at the stake, and that without condemnation or trial." The truth in this criticism is its most painful element. If the spirit of lawlessness much longer prevails, America will, in this respect, become a byword and a hissing among the nations.

#### POLITICAL DISHONOR.

Political parties may become washpots in the esteem of our best citizens. The science of politics is one of the noblest sciences known in human life. This science is that part of ethics which relates to the government of a State or a nation, conserving its safety, peace, and prosperity. In its widest meaning, politics is both the art and the science of government; it is the theory and practice by which the highest ends of civil society are secured as perfectly as possible. But when political parties are willing to sacrifice all noble principles for the sake of securing the spoils of office, they become despicable Moabs. All patriotic citizens pass them by with superb scorn as the washpots of the nation. There are individual politicians whose names are synonyms for intellectual ignorance, social vulgarity, political venality, and religious bigotry. Men of high patriotism and of moral propriety are—to use a strong Scotch word—"sconnered" at these washpot politicians. Thank God, in times of crises, noble patriotism and genuine morality lift men into love of country



rather than mere devotion to party. When partyism gives place to patriotism, there is hope for the republic.

#### PERSONAL MOABS.

Men may sin against their nobler selves and against God until they reach the level of Moab, and really become washpots by comparison with nobler men. In proportion as man is nobler than the animal, man may become viler than the beast. Made in the image of God, he may sink to a level below that of creeping things. We have seen men so fallen that they might well be called the "devil's castaways." Every noble instinct was degraded and every high ideal was destroyed. Vice had written itself in every feature of the face, and sin had marked every movement of the body. One felt almost justified in turning away from such vile creatures with mingled pity and contempt. But the religion of Christ teaches sentiments nobler and diviner. Even the most degraded of men were made in God's image; that image may be terribly defaced, but it is not entirely effaced. Even the most degraded of men were made to have glorious aspirations. They may yet become godlike. For such men Jesus Christ died on Calvary's cross; to forgive such men he now sits on heaven's mediatorial throne. He stoops down to the most degraded specimens of humanity with the hand of a brother and with

the love of a Saviour. He can take these wretched washpots, these vile utensils, these vessels of misery and dishonor and make them vessels of mercy, honor, and glory. No case is beyond the reach of his love and salvation. His saving grace says, "whosoever"; that blessed word takes in those most utterly lost. He is able to save unto the uttermost all who come unto God by him. He reaches out his hand to-night to the washpots of sin that he may cleanse them by his grace divine. Marvelous are the words of holy Scripture descriptive of the saving grace of our God! God bends from his throne as by his servant Isaiah he says, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Thank God, we may be washed even whiter than snow. Hear the voice of Jesus as he calls you to himself that you may be created anew in him, becoming new men and new women, and be thus prepared for a new life on earth, and a new heaven when old things shall pass away and all things shall become new. Then the vessels of dishonor shall be vessels to the glory of God's grace, and the Moabs of sin shall be the Israels of salvation.

## XI

### THE GOLDEN CALF

*Texts: They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.—Ps. 106 : 19.*

*Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them, as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.—I Cor. 10 : 7.*

*And they made a calf in those days and offered sacrifice unto the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands.—Acts 7 : 41.*

THE account of this sad event is found in the thirty-second chapter of Exodus; a sadder story it would be difficult to find in the entire Bible. One reads it even at this late day with an aching heart. The people of Israel had just witnessed scenes of surpassing majesty and glory, connected with Jehovah's manifestation of himself on Mount Sinai. There, after communing with Moses, God gave him the two tables of testimony written by the divine finger. At the base of this hallowed mount, the people had experienced incontestible proofs of God's presence, favor, and love. Now a period of only somewhat more than thirty days has passed and the humiliating spectacle of a lapse into awful idolatry is manifested by those who had witnessed God's approach in the midst of thunder, lightning,

earthquake, and fire. This sudden adoption of idolatrous rites is well-nigh incredible.

#### GROSS IDOLATRY.

A solemn covenant had been proposed to the people, and they accepted it with great solemnity, saying, "All the words which the Lord hath said, we will do and be obedient." Moses now goes up to the Mount to commune with God, on behalf of the people. We do not positively know how long he has now been absent, but certainly it was some time before the expiration of the period of forty days; this is clear, as several days would be required to collect the ornaments and to fashion the calf or ox. Moses is on the point of returning with the sacred tables in his hand. This period of solitude with God was of the utmost importance to Moses; in all great lives, times of communion with God must alternate with periods of activity among men. Coming back from the mountain retirement, all true workers for God will be steadier in hand, more radiant in countenance, and more heroic in heart. Even five minutes with God each day will make our lives loftier in aim and diviner in achievement. To Moses this period of communion with God was a time of instruction and adoration. When the voice of God was heard proclaiming the law, the people were so awe-stricken that they besought Moses to hear the words of Jehovah on their behalf, while they themselves promised

unquestioning obedience. But they seemed to have become familiar with the sublime spectacle; it no longer impressed them with its grandeur and glory as it did when first observed. They now speak with contempt of Moses, who led them from their Egyptian bondage. They assembled in a tumultuous and seditious spirit, they demanded objects of religious worship. We learn from the reference in the seventh chapter of Acts, that it was their intention to return to Egypt. Perhaps they supposed that Moses would never return; possibly they imagined that he had perished in the flame which they saw investing the mountain. One is amazed beyond expression at the innate depravity of the human heart. It is almost impossible to believe in a virulence so amazing. Unconsciously they pay a great compliment to Moses; they wanted gods as a substitute for their absent leader. Certainly it would take many gods, such as they could manufacture, to supply the place of Moses. They failed to profit by the discipline of waiting. It is often harder to wait than to work. They were impatient, and so fretted and rebelled over disciplinary delay. So men sin by like impatience in our day. They rush into the gospel ministry and into professional pursuits without due preparation. Often a vastly higher type of character is produced by standing still for a time than by rushing into the battle of life with much speech and little real preparation. These people who had

daily been fed by manna from heaven and daily refreshed by water from the rock, now turn from Moses and God; they changed their loyalty to God into devotion to the likeness of an ox that eateth grass. This is the sad scene brought before us in the ancient story. It is said that Josephus refused to record this humiliating incident, regarding it as so great a stain on the honor of his nation that he felt justified in passing it over without mention.

The people now demand of Aaron material for making the idol. He does not seem to have protested against their sinful request. It has been said by way of apology for him, when they made their clamorous demand upon him, that he may have thought they would not make the sacrifice of their jewels which he demanded; he, at least, determined that they should not escape their personal responsibility. But no excuse can relieve him from the sin of complying with their idolatrous request. He does not seem even to have remonstrated against the wicked demand of the people. Perhaps he thought that Moses would return before the people would bring their jewels, and thus the plans of the lawless mob would be defeated. The people, however, were ready to make the sacrifice. They furnished their jewelry apparently without an objection. These jewels were part of the spoils of the Egyptians; these gifts which they with apparent good fortune received now make their idolatrous degradation the more certain. Aaron took the trinkets, and the

golden earrings and fashioned them with a graving tool, and thus formed the calf. It is evident that the sacred historian takes no pleasure in the narrative; thus only a brief account of the making of this molten image is furnished. We cannot be quite sure of the process of the manufacture of this idol. Either a model of wood was made and it was overlaid with gold obtained by melting the earrings, or a mold was fashioned and the metal was poured into it, and thus the molten calf was produced. It was modeled after the sacred bull, Mnevis, of Heliopolis, or Apis of Memphis, worshiped by the Egyptians. Aaron erects an altar and proclaims a feast to Jehovah on the morrow. The people said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." This is shocking language. Could the people have meant what they said? Perhaps all they meant was that this molten image was the visible symbol of the true God; but their act was in direct contradiction to the second commandment; and we see by the texts of this discourse that it was unequivocal idolatry. The next day the religious revelry begins. Thus there was a mixture of divine and idolatrous worship with the indirect sanction of Aaron. Peace offerings and burnt offerings are brought, and then the people sat down to eat and to drink, and then rose up to play. They hastened to engage in this idolatrous worship, exulting in a celebration which brought upon them the displeasure of Moses and

the punishment of God. The phrase "to play" is suggestive of the wanton license connected with the abominable rites of the heathen. Who could have supposed that this favored people would have acted thus in defiance of the solemn commands of God! What a mournful scene to contemplate! How terrible that they sank to such a depth of brutish stupidity and mad infatuation!

#### MOSES ENTREATING GOD ON BEHALF OF ISRAEL.

God hears and sees in his high and holy place what occurs on the earth. Moses is in the presence of the Almighty. The period of his august communion is nearing its close; he is preparing to descend with the tables in his hand. God surprises him with the command, "Go, get thee down, for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves." In his abhorrence of their idolatrous and licentious worship, God no longer calls them his people, but the people of Moses. Righteous indignation breathes in every word thus uttered by God. God speaks after the manner of men, and urges Moses not to intercede on behalf of the stiff-necked people. What a marvelous display this is of the divine condescension to the petitions of a man! God saw that with holy violence Moses would urge his prayer. How sublime the heroic Moses now appears! How wonderful is the power of prayer! Hear the prayer of this almost superhuman Moses!



This is one of the most instructive prayers found on the pages of revelation. It is urged with three great pleas: The first is that if God destroyed this people, his act would reflect upon his own wisdom; the second plea is that their destruction would cause the Egyptians to rejoice over the ruin of a people whom they hated; the third plea is stronger still, the overthrow of the people would be a violation of God's promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Moses mentions no mitigating circumstances as an excuse for the sins of the people. He rises at once to God's glory as the dominant reason for forgiveness. Using language appropriate to men, the writer represents Jehovah as repenting of the evil which the people merited; thus God turns away from inflicting the evil he had threatened and which his people had so fully merited.

#### MOSES APPROACHING THE SCENE OF REVELRY.

In Exodus 32 : 15-20, we have the account of the descent of Moses with the tables of the law. After his intercession with God, Moses hastened to descend from the mountain. The tables of the law are in his hand; on both sides of these tables the words of Jehovah were inscribed. Johsua apparently had been waiting for Moses outside the cloud; he now joins Moses and the two great and noble men descend the mountain. Behold their approach! This is a wonderful moment in their history and in the history of Israel. The quiet waiting of

Joshua outside the cloud, while Moses was absent, is in striking and creditable contrast to the impatience and consequent idolatry of the people at the base of the mountain. What marvelous thoughts are in the heart of Moses! He might well have expected that Israel would be waiting with impatience to hear and to read the heavenly words graven by God's own finger on the tables of stone. What a glorious day this might have been for Israel; but what a terrible day it was! Listen! What is that strange sound that is heard? Joshua, as a military man, supposed that it was the shout of war in the camp, that it was either the shout of victory or defeat. A moment more and it was evident that it was the noise of those who sing. Soon the calf and the dancing are seen. What an awful moment that was for both Moses and Joshua. For a moment Moses seems to pause, and then he casts the tables out of his hands and breaks them beneath the Mount. This was an act of profound significance. It was not done in a moment of intemperate wrath. It was doubtless prompted by God himself. It was a tremendously solemn sermon preached by significant action. God had entered into a solemn covenant with the people, and they had shamefully broken that covenant. These tables were God's pledge that he would fulfil the conditions of the covenant. How can God best express his righteous indignation at Israel's failure to keep the covenant? Nothing could better express

the truth than the breaking in pieces of the solemn tables. Moses next burnt the calf in the fire, ground it to powder, strewed it upon the water in the brook from which the people were supplied with the water which they drank. All these acts are symbolic of profound religious truths. It is not necessary to go into detail in the description of these acts except to say that the utmost indignity was offered to the idol and the punishment of the people was appropriate to their sin.

How superb was the appearance of Moses in all these transactions! He was absolute master of the hour; the people fell back as he approached. They might almost have cried to the rocks and mountains to hide them from his radiant face and his flashing eye. These singing hypocrites and dancing idolaters were unspeakably contemptible in the presence of the heroic Moses. This is the scene which Michael Angelo has made immortal in his colossal statue of Moses in the Church of San Pietro in Vincoli, Rome, and represented in copies and photographs throughout the world. This statue is one of the most famous works of this most famous architect, painter, and sculptor. This gigantic figure represents Moses seated, but as ready to spring to his feet; his left hand he presses to his body as if he were endeavoring to restrain his indignation as he gazes upon the idolatrous and licentious worship of the golden calf. His right hand grasps the tables of the law; even in the marble his face frowns and his

eyes flash. The sculptor was misled by the Vulgate translation and so represented Moses with two short horns.

#### MOSES EXPOSTULATING WITH AARON.

In Exodus 32 : 21-24, we have an account of the painful duty performed by Moses in rebuking Aaron. Moses was three years the junior of Aaron, but he was higher in office and vastly more forceful in character. Aaron utterly failed to control the people, and was thus a sharer in their transgression. Now he must meet Moses face to face. Simply as a man, Moses was majestic; now, as the deputy of Jehovah, he is almost divine. Aaron must have quailed before his august presence. There is a latent vein of satire in the question of Moses, "What hath the people done unto thee?" The idea is that the conduct of Aaron was so utterly inexcusable, that some strange force must have compelled him to its performance. If he did not lead the people into sin, he at least aided and abetted their guilt, when as a virtual ruler over them, he ought to have resisted their importunity, even to the death. He makes a pitifully poor defense; he can say nothing better than that the people were determined and that he yielded to their will. The people showed a seditious spirit, bordering on anarchy, and he weakly submitted. When he declared that he had cast the golden ornaments into the fire and a calf came out, his

subterfuge is simply ridiculous. He seems to imply that the calf came out by accident or by some subtle magic. One would expect that he would have remained silent rather than employ language so utterly silly. Perhaps the narrative is only a partial account, and Aaron appears to a greater disadvantage than if the record had been fuller. He seems to have lost all of his good sense as well as his courage. Both he and the people were naked—naked of all defense for their guilty conduct.

#### MOSES DIVIDING THE PEOPLE.

Sublime is the picture in Exodus 32 : 25-39, of Moses standing in the gate of the camp and summoning all who were on the Lord's side to stand with him. They were to consecrate themselves that day anew to God. The fidelity of all was to be severely tested; no quarter was permitted in the case of the guilty. Three thousand of the rebellious fell that day. Many others must have disappeared, shrinking away utterly conscience stricken. The sons of Levi that day removed the stain which adhered to the escutcheon of their tribe in connection with the affair of the Shechemites. God's utmost wrath against the sin of disloyalty was thus terribly manifested.

#### MOSES INTERCEDING FOR THE GUILTY.

In verses 30-35 of the same chapter, we have the intercession of Moses for the guilty; it is thus

evident that all the guilty were not destroyed, but only the leaders in rebellion. The intercession of Moses is marked with wonderful tenderness. He says, "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin——" There he stops; language fails him; the sentence was never completed; we may well believe that it ended with a choking sob. This unfinished sentence is more eloquent than a page of speech; it starts our hearts throbbing even to-day. Moses immediately adds, "And if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." These words probably suggested to the Apostle Paul his strong words in Romans 9 : 3, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ." In China the names of persons tried for crimes are written in two distinct books; one is called the book of life, the other the book of death. The emperor has power to blot out any name in either list according to his sovereign pleasure. From very early times we thus see that lists were kept discriminative of conduct and character. Moses thus virtually prayed that if his people were to die, he might die with them, by having his name blotted out of the book of the living. He was one with his people. He would rather die with them than live without them. His self-sacrificing spirit stirs our hearts across all the continents and centuries.

God promises that his special angel, a term synonymous with the pillar of cloud, should go before Moses and the people; but still there should

be suffering because of their sin in relation to the calf which they and Aaron had made.

#### LESSONS.

Lessons of practical importance have been suggested to us throughout this entire exposition, but it is fitting that attention should especially be called to several important points.

First, there is evermore a painful tendency to idolatry. At the basis of the guilty conduct here punished lay the distaste for purely spiritual worship. This distaste is seen to-day in the devotion paid to the ikons in the Russian Church and to pictures and images in the Roman. It is seen in so-called Protestant churches in the undue exaltation of rites and ceremonies. We are all in danger of the guilt of idolatry. We make idols of pride, fashion, wealth, and indulgence of many kinds. These are all calves which we ourselves have made. When these calves become golden, men fall prostrate before them as worshipers. We doff the hat and bow the knee to wealth. We are proud of our rich friends. Solemn are the words of the Apostle Paul when he defines covetousness by saying that it is idolatry. Solemn is the first commandment, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." If we put husband or wife, son or daughter, before God, consciously or unconsciously, we are idolaters.

Secondly, we are ever prone to make excuses. When Adam sinned, he lost his sense of courtesy

and charged his sin upon his wife and ultimately upon God. We too are ready to charge our sin upon accident or providence. You will recall the inimitable scene in "Adam Bede" in which Mrs. Poyser savagely rebukes the clumsy Mollie for breaking a jug full of beer; while rebuking the servant, she drops a still more precious jug from her own fingers and then exclaims, "Did anybody ever see the like. The jugs are bewitched, I think." She then proceeds to argue that "There's times when the crockery seems alive, an' flies out o' your hand like a bird," she then in the spirit of a fateful philosophy affirms that "What is to be broke will be broke." Men are ever ready with excuses; they charge their own rashness, speculations, and dishonesty to their associates, to circumstances, to anything and everything rather than their own fault and sin. We are to-day guilty of the sin of Aaron in its commission and its attempted exculpation.

Thirdly, there are times when the cry must go out in business, in politics, and in religion, "Who is on the Lord's side?" We must take our stand and show our colors. We must stand in the gate and summon all who are on the Lord's side to stand with us. During the Civil War a delegation of Christian men visited President Lincoln. It was for the North one of the darkest times of that terrible strife. The speaker of the delegation said to the president, "We trust the Lord is on our side,



Mr. Lincoln." The president startled the visitors by saying, "I do not regard that as so essential as something else." The president relieved the anxiety of his visitors by adding, "I am most concerned to know that we are on the Lord's side." The Lord's side is evermore the right side. Standing alone with God, we become a tremendous majority.

Fourthly, a last lesson to be suggested is the resistless power of prayer. Where there is not repentance for sin, there is not forgiveness of sin. In securing forgiveness, prayer is of resistless power. How heroically Moses besieged the heart of God! How condescendingly God relented at the prayers of Moses. Prayer is indeed the rope that rings mercy's bell in heaven. Well might Mary of Scotland say, "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than an army of ten thousand men." The keys of heaven's windows hung on the girdle of Elijah; and in answer to his prayer, it rained not on the earth for three years and six months; and, in answer to his prayer, the heaven gave rain and the earth brought forth fruit. Prayer indeed moves the hand which moves the world. Well might Tennyson say:

More things are wrought by prayer  
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice  
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.  
For what are men better than sheep or goats  
That nourish a blind life within the brain,  
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer  
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?

If from every heart there shall go up now the sincere prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me the sinner," then like him we may all go to our homes justified, knowing that there is a God who heareth prayer.

## XII

### THE SMOKED BOTTLE

*Text: For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.—Ps. 119 : 83.*

THIS is assuredly a quaint text; but it certainly contains quick truths. A few explanatory words will make its meaning clear. In the Revised version, we have the word wine-skin instead of bottle, as in the King James version. This change in the rendering is in harmony with the original Hebrew and also with the customs of the Orient. In the East, bottles were usually made of the skins of animals. These were hung in the smoky tents which were so often the homes of the people. These tents furnished the smoke but little opportunity to escape. They had no chimneys. The smoke, therefore, found an escape through accidental openings and much of it found no escape whatever. Travelers even to-day tell us that they are often almost blinded and smothered in the tents of the Arabs. Empty wine-skins hung up in the tent would inevitably become dry and wrinkled, dark and dingy; presenting this appearance and covered with dust and soot, they were unsightly indeed.

The blackening and shriveling effect of the

smoke upon the skin is a striking illustration of mental and spiritual distress. It is certain that the language denotes affliction and misery on the part of the psalmist. He compares himself to the blackened and shriveled wine-skin. He had been reduced by affliction and sorrow to a state properly represented by a smoked and parched wine-skin. We have a somewhat similar idea in another psalm in the words, "My strength is dried up like a pottsherd." In this quotation, the meaning is that the writer's strength was not like a growing and vigorous tree, but that it was like a brittle piece of earthenware, so fragile that it could readily be crumbled to pieces.

It ought, however, to be said that some interpreters of the text explain the custom of the Orientals to hang skins full of wine in the smoke, in order that the wine may be mellowed. If this is the correct interpretation, the figure would denote the ripening, maturing, and softening influence of character by affliction. The language certainly relates in some way to the affliction of God's people. In all probability, the first interpretation here given is the true explanation of the Scripture. The psalmist, whoever he was, virtually affirms that he was so wasted by sickness and seamed by sorrow that he could be properly represented by the withered wine-skin hanging in the smoke on the side of the tent. If David were the psalmist, although this supposition is scarcely probable, the figure

would be especially strong. He is represented as having been of a ruddy countenance, but now his color is gone, his cheeks are furrowed, and his beauty is destroyed. He had been smoked with slander and parched with persecution. He felt that he was like a wine-skin which could answer no useful purpose. This is certainly a remarkable metaphor illustrating the changed condition in the case of one who had been virile and heroic. We all know that grief mars the visage and turns the natural moisture into the drought of summer. All of us have known experiences somewhat similar to those of the psalmist. We have all felt at some time in life, that we were dingy, smoky, parched, and worthless. Some of God's most eminent servants have been, for a time, enveloped in smoke which seemed to come from some hadean furnace, even from the mouth of the bottomless pit. Thus were the prophets often persecuted; thus also suffered, for a brief space, men like Wesley and Whitefield, men like Spurgeon and Moody.

#### LOYALTY IN SORROW.

Heroic are the words of this unknown psalmist, "Yet do I not forget thy statutes." These words are worthy to be written in letters of gold; they stir the blood like the blast of a trumpet. Afflictions had not driven him from his duty and his God. The more he was tried the more was his loyalty proved. Though deeply afflicted, he did not

swerve from his allegiance to the divine law. No form of evil need separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. True religion triumphs over every trial. True religion transforms apparent defeat into assured victory.

#### PRACTICAL LESSONS.

This ancient scripture abounds in lessons for modern life and duty. One of these lessons is that all God's people have their trials. Nowhere does God promise that his children shall not pass through the deep waters; but God does promise that these waters shall not overflow his children. Nowhere does God promise that his faithful followers shall not go into the furnace of affliction; but everywhere God does promise that in the furnace with his children there shall be One in form "like the Son of God." God's true children shall come forth from the furnace of trial with their dross consumed and their gold refined. As in the case of his three faithful servants whom Nebuchadnezzar, in his fury, cast into the furnace heated "seven times more than it was wont to be heated," they shall come forth, the fire having had no power upon their bodies, and they shall not have even the smell of fire on their garments. The divine alchemy of God's sovereign grace transmutes trial into triumph, sorrow into joy, and defeat into victory.

Trials come alike from prosperity and adversity. Often prosperity is a vastly greater test of character

than adversity. Many a man can endure poverty and retain his loyalty who loses loyalty and love in prosperity. It is evermore true that afflictions may be proofs of God's parental love and tests of our filial obedience. Although affliction may pierce as a thorn, God can sanctify it to the soul's highest good and its greatest growth in spiritual conduct and character. In the psalm from which the text is taken, the psalmist said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes." Also in this same psalm, he says, "Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept thy word." Affliction weaned him from self and sin and drew him to duty and to God. God had only one Son without sin; but God did not have even one Son without sorrow. Sorrow is often the fertile soil in which grow the choicest fruits of virtue. In such soil calm fortitude, sweet humility, heroic patience, and heavenly love take firm root and vigorously grow. Crushed flowers emit their sweetest odors; trimmed vines, though they may bleed, bear the most luscious fruit. And God's children become most godlike when they sweetly submit to their Father's rod. Trial brings us face to face with God. Trial separates the chaff from the wheat.

Words often in their historic significance, teach deeper truths than those which lie upon their surface. Our word "tribulation" is an example of this statement. We all know that it means sorrow,

affliction, anguish; but when we discover its derivation we learn its deeper meaning. It is derived from the Latin, *tribulum*, the threshing instrument, or roller, which was furnished with sharp points, and was part of the threshing-sledge which was dragged over the grain by the Roman husbandman, to separate it from the husks. Some Latin Christian in the early church, with that instrument in mind, appropriated the word and gave it an exalted spiritual meaning. Tribulation, in its primary significance, suggested this act of separation on the part of the husbandman. The divine Husbandman to-day uses tribulations to separate the chaff from the wheat in the developement of Christian character, and thus prepares his children for the heavenly garner.

#### SUFFERING CAUSES SORROW.

A second lesson is that all God's children experience conscious suffering in their trials. This experience belonged to the divine Master himself. It is formally affirmed of him "that he himself hath suffered being tempted." In this case, the Greek word employed is more general in its meaning than the ordinary use of the English word "tempted," it means to put to the test, that character may be tried. Christ endured trial as a test of character in a severer form than was ever presented to an ordinary man. In his temptations in the wilderness, we have the germs of all the trials that can ever



come to men in all the relations of life. Nothing is more certain than that,

He knows what sore temptations mean,  
For he has felt the same.

Christ's unique temptations were no small part of his unique passion. It is fittingly affirmed of him that, "He is able to succor them that are tempted." The remembrance of his own trials gives him sympathy with our infirmities. He is as skilful in dealing with tempted souls as he is tender in his divine-human sympathy. It is not too much to say that Christ suffered vastly more than it is possible for any human being to suffer. Suffering is a matter of nature, of culture, and of character. Some animals are comparatively immune from suffering; others are comparatively human in their sensibilities. An educated man suffers greatly more than an uneducated man. It has been suggested that a poet is more capable of suffering than a mathematician, and that a general experiences a degree of sorrow in defeat utterly unknown to a private soldier. Doubtless there is truth in all these suggestions. Christ's manhood was unique among the children of men. His nature was higher and deeper and broader than that of any child of Adam. He was the head of a new race; he was the beginning of a new creation. He was not *a* man; he was *man*. He gathered up in himself all that was noblest, sublimest, and divinest in

the entire race. He exposed an immensely broader surface to trial than that possessed by any other man born of woman. In a real sense he was the race without sin. Never was a man capable of joy so lofty and sorrow so deep as was Jesus Christ. In this respect, he stands alone among the children of men. Of this marvelous aloneness he was distinctly conscious. He said regarding it, that although the disciples should leave him alone, "Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me." Great souls experience loneliness because of their greatness. This thought of the solitariness of Christ is peculiarly touching. Those who knew him best knew him but little. Literally, notwithstanding all his human sympathies, he was alone in this world except for the presence of the Father. His superiority over men was infinite; it, unavoidably, severed him in considerable degree from human sympathy; and his affectionateness gave peculiar poignancy to the absence of human sympathy.

What is true in this respect in fullest measure of Christ, is true in some measure of all Christians. They are broader, higher, and deeper than are other men. Christianity, rightly understood and personally appropriated, broadens, heightens, and heartens its possessor. It makes men, otherwise dwarfs, intellectually, affectionally, and spiritually comparative giants. No other influence of which human nature is capable, so really greatens a man as the love of Christ in his soul. Life is the greatest

mystery which ever challenged human thought. No lexicographer or philosopher has ever been able to give a satisfactory definition of life. Jesus Christ is the life and the light of men; he is the true light of every man, so far as men have light. He came that we might have life and have it more abundantly. They who know Christ possess divine life; they are partakers of the divine nature.

Such men are, therefore, capable of greater suffering than are men of the world. In proportion to the extension of their manhood is the intension of their capacity for sorrow or joy. They cannot but suffer amid life's trials and temptations. They, however, joyously experience the presence of Christ with them in every trial of their faith. They know that no form of tribulation, neither death nor life, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the midst of their fiercest trials, they can look up to God and with Whittier, sing:

If from thy ordeal's heated bars  
Our feet are seamed with crimson scars,  
Thy will be done.

#### REMEMBERING GOD'S STATUTES.

All true believers remember God's statutes in their trials. The psalmist's joyous and triumphant affirmation gladdens every believing soul; it gives

inspiration to every doubting heart. It ought to be an article in the creed of every child of God. When afflictions bring us closer to the heart of God, they are truly sanctified in our personal experience. Afflictions often make God's commands peculiarly dear. They give a new and blessed meaning to God's sweet promises. All God's true children gloriously learn that Christ will be with them when they are in the smoke of conflict and in the fire of trial. The peerless Apostle Paul could triumph in God, although confronted by Nero's bar and the executioner's axe. Chrysostom, the Golden-mouthed, dared denounce Eudoxia from his pulpit in St. Sophia as a second Jezebel, notwithstanding her absolute power and her enkindled wrath. He could die saying, "Glory to God in all things," in spite of cruel banishment and terrible suffering. Bunyan could remain in Bedford jail for twelve weary years, affirming that he would remain in prison until the moss grew on his eyebrows, rather than be false to his principles and faithless to his God. He did not forget God's statutes in the darkness and dampness of Bedford jail. From that prison went out his "Pilgrim's Progress," which has girdled the world, and has brightened and beautified lives around the globe. In the wretched prison of Oungpen-la the heroic Judson suffered and triumphed, rejoicing that he was deemed worthy to suffer for the sake of lost souls and in honor of the seeking Saviour.

She was one of the most beautiful women in service and character whom I have ever known. During a period of ten days, she lost her husband, one of the princes in the church of God, her daughter, who was her only child, and the grand-daughter, who was a babe. She sat in the pew and looked up into my face, her face illumined with the glory of the Lord. The service was over. Pastoral words seemed cold and almost cruel. Looking up into her pastor's face, she said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." The music of heaven was in her speech, as the glory of the Lord was shining on her countenance.

The day will come when all of God's people will come up, not only out of the smoke, but also out of the flame, praising him for all the experiences of life. The clouds shall roll away and the morning of an eternal day shall dawn. They shall enter that world where there is no fire of trial and no smoke of temptation; that city where there is no night and no death, and no darkness; that city that has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb."

### XIII

## THE BURNED BELLOWS

*Text: The bellows are burned.—Jer. 6 : 29.*

THIS is certainly an odd text ; at the first glance, it is an obscure text. It is capable, however, of giving us many and important practical lessons. This is the only instance in the Bible of the use of the word "bellows." Indeed, many reasonably intelligent Bible students do not know that there is such a passage as this in the Bible. The Revised version renders the text, "The bellows blow fiercely," but in the margin the rendering of the Common version is retained. This rendering is more consonant with the thought of the context.

We know that the bellows were used as early as the time of Moses ; without some such instrument, the operations of the foundry would be almost impossible. In a tomb at Thebes, bearing the date of Thothmes III., who is generally believed to be the contemporary of Moses, there are representations of the bellows showing their use at that early date. Among the Egyptians much ingenuity was exercised in the construction of machines of this general character for producing

strong currents of air. Generally a leathern bag was fitted into a frame and securely fastened; sometimes two of these bags were united practically into one machine. A long pipe extended from these bags and the wind was thus carried to the fire. The operator stood upon these bags, one being under each foot, and with a string in each hand he pulled up the exhausted bag. Sometimes Egyptian mural paintings indicate that when the operator removed his feet, the bellows rose as if filled with air; this action would imply the use of the valve. The pipe which carried the wind to the fire was usually made of reed, but its point was covered with metal to preserve it from being destroyed by the heat. We know also that this instrument was common to the Greeks and the Romans at a very early date. Homer, in the *Iliad*, refers to the bellows in the forge of Hæphæstus. The use of the bellows was usually confined to workers in metals, as fans furnished sufficient wind for the wood and charcoal fires used for domestic purposes in the Orient. The hand-bellows are still used for small fires in Egypt, and they correspond nearly to the bellows used in our own country for similar purposes.

#### THE FIGURE HERE EMPLOYED.

Jeremiah frequently spoke in parables; he thus often used striking metaphors. Here he compares the people to ore which was supposed to contain

good metal. The refiner, therefore, put it into the furnace. His purpose, of course, is to separate the alloy from the silver. In the earlier days, a portion of lead was used for this purpose, a function now performed by quicksilver. When the mass was fully fused, the cupel absorbed the lead and also the dross or alloy. The silver was then found in its purity on the top of the cupel. The prophet represents the people under the figure of alloyed silver. In them impurities abound; they are put into the hands of the assayer to be purified. The bellows are now placed in position; the fire is lighted; every effort to secure a good result is made; the bellows being used to their utmost power. What is the result? Is the alloy removed and the silver purified? To the utter disappointment of the assayer, it is found that the dross is so mixed with the silver that they cannot be separated. The heat was so great that the nozzle of the bellows is melted; the lead is absorbed, but the alloy remains. The assayer gives up the process in utter discouragement; he will not longer continue a process so difficult and useless, and he pronounces the mass to be "reprobate silver."

The prophet applies his parable to the people of Israel. Their evil habits and constant disloyalty had become so fixed that they would not yield to the gracious dealings of God with them for their salvation. The Lord regretfully rejects them as the assayer rejected the reprobate silver; they



seemed to be incorrigible; against them, for their deserved chastisement, their enemies shall be permitted to prevail. In the condition, treatment, and rejection of his people of that day, God has important lessons for all peoples in our day.

#### WEARIED WORKERS.

Workers for God and man may exhaust all their resources of helpfulness with apparently no good result. In this sense, it is true that the bellows are burned. Probably the text applies, primarily, to Jeremiah himself; he had exhausted all his powers of body, mind, and heart; but the dross of the people was not removed. His earnest labors were apparently in vain. The bellows were burned, but the ore was not purified. All the prophet's powers of speech and emotion were expended; but the people were not separated from their sins, the wheat from the chaff, the silver from the alloy, the precious from the vile. It was true of Noah as of Jeremiah, that the bellows were burned and but few of the people were saved. For one hundred and twenty years his voice rang out in clarion tones, warning the people of the coming deluge. He preached by deeds as well as by words, having prepared an ark against the approaching danger, but, with the exception of himself and his family, his auditors perished in the terrible flood. But Noah did not preach and labor in vain. This reference to him is an echo

of his own warning words uttered in that remote past. Isaiah, the glorious evangelical prophet, cried out in his sense of failure as the messenger of God, "Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" He further declared that he had stretched out his hands all day long to a disobedient people; but this noble prophet is a power for truth and God to this hour. No sweeter words than his regarding the suffering and triumphant Messiah are found in the Bible. He seems to be an evangelist of the New Testament rather than a prophet of the Old Testament. Jeremiah, in the bitterness of his sorrow over the sins of the people, said, "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!" Thus he bewailed the manifold sins of the people; thus he thought the "bellows were burned," and no good result was secured. But the text of this sermon, and the sermon itself, are witnesses to the continuance of his power. His plaintive words have echoed through the centuries. They stir our hearts at this hour. John the Baptist might have said, "The bellows are burned," and the people are not saved. Jesus Christ pronounced upon him a sublime eulogy, "Among them that are born of women there hath not arisen a greater than John the Baptist." The divine Lord and Master, who knew what was in man in every act and

thought, thus became his hearty encomiast. Noble Baptist! Decapitated in the castle of Machærus, his head brought in a platter to gratify the vengeance of a shameless woman, it might be thought that his life was in vain. Silly Salome, cowardly Herod, satanic Herodias! Brave Baptist, heroic as a preacher and immortal as a martyr!

Judged by the number of his followers at the time of his ascension, it might be thought that our Lord's life was fruitless. But he sits to-day on the world's throne, swaying a scepter regnant as never before in the world's history. To-day Jesus Christ is Prophet, Priest, and King for the good of men and the glory of God, as never before since he ascended to his vacant throne, receiving the homage of earth and heaven!

All the martyrs might at first thought have exclaimed, "The bellows are burned in vain." Behold Chrysostom, the Golden-mouthed, thousands swayed by his eloquence in Antioch; elevated to the episcopate of Constantinople, there pouring out his burning words in St. Sophia, denouncing the Empress Eudoxia; banished to the mountain village of Cuensus in the Tauric range, recalled, again banished, and, in 407, dying at Comana, in Pontus, on his way into still remoter exile on the shores of the Black Sea, exclaiming as he dies, "Glory be to God for all things. Amen!" The bellows were not burned for naught. Volume on volume of his masterful sermons the church still

possesses. His superb eloquence still resounds through Christendom. Behold John Wycliffe, "The Morning Star of the Reformation," declared a heretic by the Council of Constance, May 4, 1415; his books to be burned, his bones taken up and thrown out of consecrated ground! Thirteen years later Pope Martin V. laid upon Bishop Fleming of Lincoln the reproach of executing this decree. Wycliffe's bones were taken up and burned and the ashes were thrown into the Swift, a branch of the Avon, which empties into the Severn, which widens into the Bristol Channel, and thus his ashes, like his doctrines, were carried around the world. Wycliffe is crowned with unfading glory as the first great evangelical reformer. Remember John Huss, daring to preach the truth and to defy the pope; see him in prison on an island in Lake Constance; then in the Castle of Gottleben, where he was put in chains; behold him in June, 1415, before the Council, virtually condemned before he was heard; behold him July 6, sentenced, and the same day burned at the stake, dying while he sang with loud voice, the *Kyrie eleison*. The bellows were burned, but John Huss still lives to inspire noble souls as witnesses for God. Behold the eloquent Savonarola, the heroic reformer, refusing the largess sent him by Lorenzo de' Medici, the Magnificent, who was then at the height of his power. He could not buy the silence of the brave preacher. The heroic reformer

launched his scathing denunciations against all the higher ecclesiastics, including their infamous head, Pope Alexander VI. The angry pope threatened Florence with an interdict, if she spared the hated friar. May 22, 1498, sentence of death was pronounced upon him; on the day following, he and two of his friends were publicly hanged, and their bodies then burned in the Piazza della Signoria, and their ashes thrown into the Arno. Did Savonarola die a martyr's death in vain? Assuredly not. A few years later Raphael painted his portrait in the halls of the Vatican; and the heroic friar, though dead, still spoke, cheering on Martin Luther and other reformers to trial and to triumph.

Carey and his fellow-missionaries labored seven years before the baptism of the first Hindu convert. Great Britain sneered with Sidney Smith at William Carey as "the consecrated cobbler." Carey really seemed to be on a fool's errand in India. But see him dying at the age of seventy-three, while more than two hundred thousand copies of the Scriptures are issued from Serampore in forty different languages, and in the tongues of nearly four hundred millions of the human family. The bishop of the Anglican Church in India bows his head at the death-bed of Carey and invokes the blessing of this dying saint and immortal Baptist missionary. He did vastly more for India than any one of the British generals or statesmen.

It seemed for a time in the case of Adoniram Judson that the bellows were burned in vain. Years passed and converts were few. The churches at home lost heart and faith; but Judson wrote, "Beg the churches to have patience, success is as certain as the promise of a faithful God can make it." To-day two hundred thousand Christians are the fruit of his consecrated toil. No good word spoken of or for God is ever spoken for naught. Men may die, but the truth lives, and will at last win the crown of everlasting life.

#### DOING PRESENT DUTY.

Men often neglect all their ordinary opportunities waiting for what they deem will be greater opportunities. In this way also the bellows are burned. A striking word is opportunity; it means literally at or before the port or harbor. It comes from the prefix *op* for *ob* and *portus* a port, harbor, haven. The opportune time is the time at or before the port. Unfortunately we are all constantly disposed to neglect the present chance, looking to a more favorable one in the future. Opportunities abound here and now. What we need is eyes to see them and pluck to discharge present duties, however lowly. The best preparation for greater opportunities is the faithful performance of present obligations. The man who waits for something to turn up is likely to find himself at last turned down. The man who goes

out and turns something up is the man of the hour. Mr. Micawber is not the man needed in our day. Our age wants men and women who think and do, and not those who simply dream of doing. Wise are the words of Carlyle, "Our grand business is, not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to do what lies clearly at hand." It is evermore true that our best things are near us, did we have skill to discover their worth. Young men whine that they no longer have good chances; never was there a greater mistake. Our country is, itself, the land of opportunity. How came Charles Evans Hughes to be chosen as the chief investigator of the insurance companies that recently were subjected to official examination? He was chosen because he had fully proved his capacity in other legal trials. He was prepared by faithful performance of lowlier duties to enter the port opened equally for other lawyers. How came he to receive the nomination of a great political party for the governorship of the State of New York? Did it come to him because the professional politicians loved him and desired to grant him favors? It came to him in spite of the professional politicians. It came to him because of his great capacity and spotless character as shown in all his previous life. In a critical moment of its political history in New York, the Republican party turned to him as the strongest man available. Faithful in that which was less,

he was honored with the nomination to that which is greater. His promotion is in harmony with the divine law formulated by Jesus Christ.

But in the case of many men, the bellows are burned and chances of the future are lost by the neglect of present duties. We ought to illustrate the truth of Disraeli's words, "The secret of success in life is for a man to be ready for his opportunity when it comes." The world is full of open gates, and those who are ready by training and by character may enter and win their highest business and professional honors. Those who have achieved most are illustrations of the truth of this law. Edison, known and honored throughout the world, began his experiments in a baggage car while a newsboy on the Grand Trunk Railway. In a bath room Ericsson began the construction of screw propellers. Maria Mitchell, on seventy-five dollars a year as librarian of the Atheneum, on the lonely Island of Nantucket, laid the foundation of her fame as an astronomer. Christine Nilsson ran barefoot in childhood as the daughter of Swedish parents. Harriet G. Hosmer, living in Watertown, Mass., walked to and from Boston daily, a distance of seven miles, when she began her studies; in Rome she carved statuary which has made her name famous on two continents.

Illustrations might be multiplied by the score as to the truth of the law that lowly service opens the way for lofty honor. There is a supreme



moment in the life of every man and woman; it may come in the morning, at noon, or at night. It often comes silently; but it determines the entire future. It is a moment big with fate; at that moment the clock of destiny strikes. Let us not idly bewail lost opportunities, groaning that the bellows are burned, and that the water has been spilled. The Wise Woman of Tekoa spoke with a philosophy worthy of her reputation when she said, "We must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground which cannot be gathered up again." It is useless to cry over spilt water; it is better to drink of the fresh cup which the new opportunity offers. Amnon is dead, so the woman reasoned, and all the weeping in the world will not bring him back to life. But Absalom is alive; therefore, O David, take him to thy heart, rise from the dust, and cease mourning for the lost Amnon. The great dramatist expresses a thought appropriate to the truth here emphasized in the familiar words:

There is a tide in the affairs of men,  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune,  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

#### THE BELLOWS BURNED SPIRITUALLY.

Some men foolishly and wickedly reject all God's gracious invitations and providences for their spiritual salvation. Thus, in a terribly solemn sense,

"the bellows are burned." In the context the people of Israel are represented as "reprobate silver"; they are, therefore, rejected as utterly worthless. They glittered as silver and led the assayer to hope that his experiment would be most successful. But, notwithstanding his diligent efforts, nothing of value was found. The spiritual teaching is that they will be rejected by the Lord as dross. When the refining fire cannot separate between the vile and the precious, a consuming fire will do its effective work. God has no pleasure in the death of any sinner. He adopts every means to bring men to repentance and salvation. He will not reject men until they reject him. No man will be ultimately lost but the man who deliberately prefers darkness to light, sin to holiness, death to life, and Satan to God. Men will go where in their deepest natures they desire to go. There is a law of moral gravitation, as truly as there is a law of physical gravitation. If we put ourselves in its line, all its force will be employed for our salvation; if we oppose it, its resistless might will secure our condemnation. Strictly speaking, men cannot break a moral law. They may run against a moral law, and it is they who will be broken.

Preachers of an earlier generation greatly emphasized the idea of a day of grace in the redemptive purposes of God. The old preachers were right; this idea is universal. There is a day of grace in agriculture; a time to plow, a time to

sow, and a time to reap. If this day of grace should be neglected, no sighs, tears, or prayers will cause it to return. Every day is a day of grace in some connection; the duty neglected on any day is neglected forever. It was a strange experience in going from Honolulu to Yokohama that we lost a day. We crossed the "line," the 180th meridian; it marks the division between the Eastern and the Western hemispheres, and is the exact antipode of Greenwich. Going westward, we lost an entire day, having gone to sleep on Saturday night and having risen on Monday morning. There was no Sunday on that trip. Except we return sometime by the same route, we can never recover the lost day; and as we pass through this world but once, a day lost is lost forever.

There is a day of grace in education. Many a man despised and neglected that day; he would not study and he would not appreciate the value of education. For him, "the bellows are burned," so far as lost educational opportunities are concerned; although he might now give all that he is worth for a college education, he cannot secure it; for him the day of grace has passed forever. There is a day of grace in religion. The law in the natural world extends to the spiritual world. It is true in both worlds, that whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. That law is universal as gravitation, and eternal as God. God is a sovereign, but he is not capricious, despotic, and

tyrannical. He appeals to our reason, saying, "Come now, and let us reason together." Beautiful are the words, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Thank God, the bellows of redemptive purpose are not yet burned; there is hope for all who will seek God with all their hearts. The day may come when another text by the prophet Jeremiah may be true, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended and we are not saved." Then, indeed, the bellows will be burned. Now, however, it is summer; now the harvest is not past; now salvation may blessedly be ours. The moment is solemn; on it eternity may hang. Let us remember with our own patriotic, cultured, and poetic Lowell, that:

Once to every man and nation, comes the moment to  
decide,  
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood, for the good or  
evil side.

## XIV

### THE SNORTING HORSES

*Text: The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan.  
—Jer. 8 : 16.*

THIS is assuredly a strange text; but the moment that we become familiar with its setting, its significance will fully appear. In connection with this text, as in so many other parts of this prophecy, we have the prophet's reproof for the sins of the people, and also the threatening of God because of those sins. Reproofs and threatenings are wisely intermingled.

The sins of the people are described with great fulness and with equal plainness. They were sins of injustice toward one another, hypocrisy in religion, incorrigibleness toward God, corruption and debauchery of both rich and poor, idolatry and impurity, fearful departures from and impudent defiance of God, and, as the result of all these sins and partly as their cause, utter absence of the fear of God. During all this period of guilt, God's exhortations through the prophet Jeremiah were frequent and insistent. The people were told that a foreign foe should attack their land, that their fortifications should be destroyed, and that, finally,

they themselves should be carried away into captivity.

There is, however, an intimation given with the warnings that God, in the midst of his righteous inflictions, would remember the people in mercy; there is this bit of silver lining in the dark cloud, this gleam of light in the surrounding darkness. Jeremiah was a powerful preacher. The sermons in the book which bears his name are filled with terrible woes, but these woes are baptized in the pitying tears of this great preacher and true patriot.

It would be difficult to find in the sermonic literature of any age or people sermons more powerful and plaintive. Jeremiah was a master preacher in the faithful blending of these two qualities inseparable from great sermons; indeed, the plaintiveness of his sermons was no small element of their powerfulness. He delights in mingling the tenderer emotions in his warnings, while he employs all his power of argument in the effort to bring his wandering people back to God. The people, however, did not repent and turn from their evil ways.

In the sixth chapter he gives us a prophecy of the certain invasion of the land. It must have cost his heart many pangs to utter the words. He paints the picture of Jerusalem besieged by the Chaldean army. The alarm caused by the approach of this army would be loud and terrible. The people are urged to flee from the country

for safety; they are to blow the trumpet in Tekoa, a city twelve miles south of Jerusalem and situated on an elevation. They are to kindle beacons on the hilltops between Jerusalem and Tekoa; and they are to make in every way as vigorous a resistance as possible. The prophet knew well that the Chaldean army could easily invade the land of Judah. The awful judgments which were to fall upon the people came as punishments of their sins. The people are to be oppressed because they had been oppressors; the measure which they had dealt to others shall now be dealt to them by others. From the prince to the peasant all had been oppressors; and so from the prince to the peasant shall all now be oppressed. The merciless Chaldeans shall destroy young and old alike; the aged and feeble, and the young and gay should be involved in a common destruction.

As the prophet's sermon proceeds he shows the people that their plea, that they had the temple of God among them and that they attended its services, would be of no avail, unless their lives were marked by justice and righteousness. He reminds his hearers of the desolations of Shiloh; although God's sanctuary was there, Shiloh was destroyed. Jerusalem was now as sinful as was ever Shiloh. The temple of Jerusalem can be overthrown as truly as was the tabernacle at Shiloh.

As we follow this solemn sermon into the eighth

chapter, we have strikingly suggestive descriptions of the fearful desolations to be wrought by the Chaldean invaders. Death would now no longer give repose; the bones of the dead shall be disturbed and cast out of their graves. The vengeful Chaldean invaders shall violate the sepulchres alike of prince and peasant. These barbarians shall be guilty of the most inhuman cruelties. The sun, moon, and stars shall be spectators of these awful tragedies. False teachers had cried, "Peace, peace," but there was no true peace. Priests and prophets taught for money, and cared not for truth. It is not surprising, therefore, that Jehovah said, "I will surely consume them." It is not surprising that the prophet said, "When I would comfort myself against sorrow, my heart is faint in me." Unspeakably sad are the words, "The harvest is passed, the summer is ended, and we are not saved." Hear Jeremiah's plaintive cry: "Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" These words touch our hearts as they come to us across continents and centuries. Is there no medicine for a sick and dying nation? Is there no skilful hand to apply the medicine? Are the desolations irreparable? Is the disease incurable?

The prophet's vision sweeps his country as far northward as Dan. This city was at the northern extremity of the land, even as Beersheba was at



the extreme south. It thus came to pass that the proverbial expression, "from Dan to Beersheba," denoted the entire extent of the "promised land." Laish was the name of Dan before its conquest by the Danites. It is now called Tel-el-Kadi, "the hill of the judge." The Arabic word Kadir and the Hebrew word translated Dan are synonymous, and mean judge. A copious and crystal spring bursts from a basin on the west side of the hill. The stream is large enough, especially when joined by a number of sparkling rills, to form a considerable river; it is one of the sources of the Jordan. At Dan, Jeroboam set up one of the calves of idolatrous worship, the other being at Bethel.

The vision of the prophet sweeps northward to this ancient city. He sees there the mighty army of the Chaldeans invading the land. Yonder they come with their resistless cavalry! They have crossed the line; they are at Dan! A marvelously fine figure the prophet gives us as he beholds the magnificent horses of the Chaldeans; he declares in the words of the text that "The snorting of his horses was heard from Dan." The neighing of his superb cavalry was heard all the way to Jerusalem. Dan lay on the way from Babylon to Jerusalem. So terrible, according to the prophet's striking image, was the united neighing of the cavalry of the Babylonians, that the reverberations of the air shook the whole land.

It would be difficult to find in any writings, ancient or modern, a more majestic figure than we have in this description. It is a vastly finer image than the famous line in Virgil, so often quoted by writers on rhetoric: *Quadrupē dante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum.*" In this line, Virgil represents the ground as shaking with the prancing of many horses; but that is the natural effect of the prancings. Jeremiah describes the earth as shaking by the neighing of the invaders' terrible cavalry. This is a truly magnificent figure of speech, and it entirely becomes the lofty eloquence of this powerful preacher.

This ancient story contains lessons for modern life. One of these lessons is that God notes and will assuredly punish the sins of unrepentant men. There was at Crete a statue of Jupiter devoid of ears; this was a true representation of a heathen deity. We are distinctly informed in the One Hundred and Fifteenth Psalm that although the heathen deities have mouths, they speak not; and eyes, they see not; and ears, they hear not. But our God has eyes and ears which see and hear. He searches the darkest corners of the earth and of the heart. God is never off duty. His throne is in the heavens, but the earth is his footstool. God is the living God, omnipresent, omniscient, and omnipotent. He is also loving and merciful beyond the power of human speech to express or human thought to conceive. All glory be to his great and holy name!

His righteous indignation against sin is but the flame of his holy love. He is never more loving than when his holiness flashes out against evil. The snorting horses of God's judgments we may even now hear against wrongs personal and civic. The heathen proverb is: "The avenging deities are shod with wool." This idea finds frequent illustration in the writings of the Greek dramatists; they show how these deities noiselessly approach, and then strike their soundless and resistless blow. But God gives numerous warnings before the stroke of justice falls. The prayer of the Intercessor spares for another year even the cumberer of the ground. The snorting of the Babylonian war-horses heard in Jerusalem, according to the prophet's figure, was another warning. Pain in the body is the evidence that some physical law has been violated; pain is thus the loving messenger communicating to the brain the fact of this violation. Moral laws sweep through the universe as truly as do physical laws. Physical gravitation is no more real, universal, and certain than moral gravitation. Strictly speaking, we never break a moral law; we run against it and it breaks us. In their majesty and grandeur, these laws move on throughout time and space. The horsemen of God's eternal righteousness are evermore thundering through the world. The neighing of these horses is a token of the love of God as a Father rather than a suggestion of his wrath as a judge. Our hearts often mis-

understand the meaning of the echoes of the hoof-beats of God's providence. Scott, in "Marmion," speaks of Mimosa's tender tree shrinking from the touch. Longfellow, in "Evangeline," expands this thought, saying:

As, at the tramp of a horse's hoof on the turf of the  
prairies,  
Far in advance are closed the leaves of the shrinking  
mimosa,  
So, at the hoof-beats of fate, with sad forebodings of evil  
Shrinks and closes the heart, ere the stroke of doom has  
attained it.

These warnings are evidences of love. The trainman, running down the track with the red lantern, warning the approaching train of an obstruction on the track is a messenger of mercy. The warnings of the Bible are as loving as its tenderest invitations.

The outbreaks resulting from the lawlessness of the hour in lynchings and other forms of murder are warnings of greater danger to come, if the American people persist in the spirit of reckless violations of law which have marked the past decade. We are in danger of the shameful pre-eminence of being the most lawless people in the civilized world. Recent outbreaks bring the blush to the cheek of every patriotic American. God thus warns us against greater dangers if we permit mob law longer to prevail. Who can defy the

Almighty? Who dare lift his puny arm against the omnipotent God? Listen! Even now we can hear the neighing of the horses. They are already at Dan; they will soon be in Jerusalem. Let us in penitence turn away from our sin and seek the mercy of our God.

A second lesson is that God often uses nations hostile to himself as his instruments in chastising other nations. Nebuchadnezzar led an army against Necho, defeated him at Carchemish, a strong post on the Euphrates; he also took Phœnicia, Palestine, and Jerusalem, and then pressed forward to Egypt. He carried off part of the ornaments of the temple, and hostages of distinguished rank, among whom were the youths Daniel and his three friends, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael, who were educated at the court and in the language and sciences of the Chaldeans, and who also later filled offices of great distinction. The sacred vessels Nebuchadnezzar carried to his own temple at Babylon. Additional and terrible trials for Jerusalem followed one another apace. For three years Jehoiakim was loyal to Babylon; then he renounced his allegiance and renewed his alliance with Necho. This led to his being made prisoner and finally to his death. His son and successor, Jehoiachin, after a very brief reign, surrendered himself to Nebuchadnezzar, who in person besieged Jerusalem. The most distinguished inhabitants were now led into captivity, the number not being

fewer than fifty thousand. The golden vessels and royal treasures were then carried away. Zedekiah was now placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, and bound by an oath to refrain from any alliance with Egypt. But in the ninth year of his reign, he violated this oath and formed an alliance with Pharaoh-Hophra, the successor of Necho. Again Nebuchadnezzar captured Jerusalem in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign. The glorious temple and the historic city were razed to the ground. Zedekiah made the treaty with the king of Egypt against the warnings of Jeremiah. When the city was destroyed, Zedekiah escaped; he was captured near Jericho, was brought to Nebuchadnezzar at Riblah, and there, by Nebuchadnezzar's orders, his eyes were put out and his sons and chief nobles were slain. Zedekiah was then carried to Babylon and imprisoned for life. Jeremiah escaped death and fled with a number of other Jews into Egypt. Thus terrible were the punishments which befell the people because of their disobedience to Jeremiah as the prophet of God.

God called Nebuchadnezzar his servant, and "the staff of God's indignation and the rod of his anger." God used him for the chastisement of his own people; in this sense he was truly God's servant. Not less was Cyrus, the celebrated Persian conquerer of Babylon, God's servant. He promulgated the first edict for the restoration of the Jews to their own land. To him God said, "I

am Jehovah and there is none else, there is no God beside me; I have girded thee though thou hast not known me." The hearts of all men are in God's hand; he can turn them as he determines. He can make the heathen Cyrus truly his servant in granting blessings to his people. Tyrannous Spain would not listen to the neighing of God's horses of justice in Cuba. God gave Spain warning upon warning, but all these warnings were unheeded. Spain determined to carry the principles of bigotry, intolerance, and persecution of Europe in the sixteenth century into America in the twentieth century. God, therefore, made the American people his instruments in driving Spain out of the Western hemisphere. God raised up Japan to chastise Russia; every victory on land and sea won by the heroic Japanese was truly a victory for the downtrodden moujiks of Russia. The Japanese were really fighting for civil and religious liberty for Russia; and out of the degraded Russia of to-day a nobler Russia will emerge some day to take her place among truly civilized nations, and to bless God and the Japanese for the defeats which led to true national greatness.

As God used America to chastise Spain, so God may use China and Japan to chastise America. We treated the Chinese brutally, mobbing and clubbing them, and robbing them of the rights due them as human beings. We listened to the

Sand-lots orators denouncing the Chinese, and we put on our statute books laws against them which will cause our children to blush. China punished us by organizing a boycott against American trade causing a loss of many millions of dollars. This loss is the penalty we have already paid for this gross injustice; this loss is the neighing of God's horses of righteous indignation warning us, if we persist in our injustice, of greater evils to come. In the same part of our country we are showing to-day a spirit of injustice toward the Japanese. This is the spirit of provincialism, bigotry, and caste, and it is unworthy of a great nation. Japan, unlike China, will not long remain silent, suffering our indignities. Japan and China, if united, will soon become a well-nigh resistless military force. Our sneers at the yellow man must cease; our justice toward all men of every creed and color must be real and conspicuous. Only the Golden Rule is the golden key that will unlock the golden gate of the Golden Age.

A third lesson is the blessed truth that God offers mercy to all penitent souls. Thank God, there is balm in Gilead! Thank God, there is a Physician there! Why then are not the people healed? Simply because they will not apply to the physician or use the balm. Gilead was a country near the prophet and his people; this blessed balm is nearer to dying men to-day. It is the most blessed balm ever offered to the world:



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Not balm, new bleeding from the wounded tree,  
Nor bless'd Arabia with his spicy grove,  
Such fragrance yields.

Jesus Christ has tasted death for every man.  
His precious blood soothes the troubled conscience and cleanses it from all sin. How shall men escape, if they neglect so great salvation? If they perish it will be because they will not come to Christ for life. Come, O men and women, and be saved with an everlasting salvation!

## XV

### THE SPECKLED BIRD

*Text: Mine heritage is unto me as a speckled bird.—  
Jer. 12 : 9.*

THE prophet Jeremiah was grieved at the prosperity of the wicked. He could not understand how men who opposed God could win wealth and other forms of success in life. Still he saw men of this character increasing in wealth and power. He wonders how a righteous God could give affluence and honor to vicious men, while virtuous men suffered dishonor and poverty. He, therefore, pleads with God that he may be instructed regarding this perplexing problem.

He lays down, as an unquestionable certainty, the truth that God was righteous, and that, in some way, all things must work together for good to those who serve God. With this truth he would arm himself against the temptation to envy the prosperity of the wicked. But he wishes to know how these things, so difficult of comprehension, happen under the direction of a benevolent and omnipotent God. He desires to reason with God that he may obtain instruction. We may not rightly strive with our Maker, but, by his

gracious permission, we may reason with our Maker. Jeremiah sees that the land mourns because many of the people are gross hypocrites. Thus often clouds and darkness are round about God; but we may still firmly believe that justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne.

The problem of the prosperity of the wicked is as perplexing in our day as it was in the time of Jeremiah. Their temporary prosperity God permits as a manifestation of his loving patience. For a time the wicked may flourish as a green bay tree, but eventually they will pass away and not be found. God permits the wicked to prosper that thus they may fill up the measure of their iniquity. Hypocrisy was one of the sins which Jeremiah rebuked; the real root of hypocrisy is atheism. Evermore the hypocrite is practically an atheist; for, while God may be in his mouth, atheism is in his heart.

In the earlier part of the chapter from which the text is taken God seems to rebuke the prophet, who was unduly sensitive because of the unkindness of his countrymen. Their unkindness discouraged him and made him willing to abandon his work of preaching; but God would teach him that sorer trials awaited him in the future. He ought to prepare himself for future difficulties by the patient performance of present duties. Perhaps it is to the prophet that these words are addressed, "If thou hast run with the footmen,

and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And, if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" Perhaps, however, these words are addressed by God through Jeremiah to the people. If so, the meaning is, "If you have been so humbled by the Assyrians and by the Ammonites and Moabites, then what can you do against adversaries so mighty as the Chaldeans?" Their invasion would sweep you away like the swelling of Jordan when the river overflows its banks.

In the seventh verse of this twelfth chapter, God tells us that he has forsaken the temple which had been his sacred palace; the people had so dishonored the holy place that they had practically driven God from its sacred precincts. God had thus abandoned his heritage. The sins of the people cried to heaven for vengeance, even as lions roar in the forest. His heritage had become to him as a speckled bird.

There are several possible meanings to the comparison of the people to a speckled bird. Some interpreters understand the phrase to mean "as a bird with talons." The idea then would be that the people were continually pecking at one another, that in their contentions they had really turned their country into a cock-pit. Another idea is that the speckled bird means a bird dyed, bedewed, or sprinkled with the blood of her prey.

We know that the shedding of innocent blood was one of the heinous sins of the people; thus the birds round about, various other nations, pecked at Jerusalem. But the true interpretation seems to be that the speckled or pied bird, a bird mottled with various colors, has its name from the fact that the people mingled heathen superstitions with the divine institutions of their religious worship; they had corrupted the worship of the true God with heathenish rites and ceremonies. They thus laid themselves open to the incursions of different nations whose gods and forms of worship they had adopted. Theirs was thus a party-colored religion. The prophet, therefore, virtually says to them: "So far as you have followed the surrounding nations in their religious ceremonies, so far shall they claim that you are practically their adherents. Wherever these nations find that their gods are worshiped they will virtually claim, as their own, the land in which and the people by whom that worship is exercised." It is true that all God's genuine people are in the world as a speckled bird, at which men look, wonder, and often peck. But that does not seem to be the meaning in this text. By their folly and sin the people of Jeremiah's time, in adopting various heathen ceremonies, had corrupted the true faith and had made themselves ridiculous in the sight even of heathen nations, and odious in the sight of God.

## SPECKLED BIRDS IN BUSINESS.

Speckled birds abound in all the walks of life. There are men in business who mingle dishonest practices with honest endeavors, falsehood with truth, and hypocrisy with sincerity. We must not, for a moment, allow ourselves to believe that business men are, for the most part, dishonest; nothing could be farther from the truth. All business enterprises rest ultimately on confidence; we are saved in business by faith, as truly as in religion. If faith in one another were utterly lost, all business enterprises would be destroyed before noonday to-morrow. We ought not to indulge in indiscriminate denunciation of corporations as is the tendency of the hour. No man has a right to array class against class in our American life. To do so, is to do unspeakable harm to all business interests. The denunciation of the rich, simply because they are rich, is as silly as it is wicked. The creation of prejudice on the part of the poor toward the rich does injustice equally to the rich and to the poor.

True religion is always the friend of industry; it never puts a premium on laziness or any other form of vice. At the very dawn of human history, man was taught to earn his bread in the sweat of his face. The Apostle Paul teaches us that if a man will not work, he ought to starve. We ought not to speak as if business, when honestly

conducted, is opposed to religion. In their place and for their purpose, the desk and the counter may be as sacred as the pulpit and the communion table, in their place and for their purpose. The workman's apron may be as holy as the bishop's robe. Every anvil and work-bench may practically be altars unto God. Every counting-room may be as holy as a cathedral, and the school-house where the mind is trained, as sacred as the church. Quaintly and truly has it been said:

In laborer's ballad oft more piety  
God finds, than in Te Deum's melody.

That was an utterly unmanly and unchristian conception of a religious life which led men and women who wished to be religious to abandon the world and to become monks and nuns. The whole system of monasticism grew out of this false conception of true religion. Its germs are found both in heathenism and in Judaism; the evidence of their presence appeared as early as the middle of the second Christian century. In the fourth century, monasticism appeared in at least three forms. Its first stage was the ascetic life. It appeared next in hermit life, or anchoretism, which was external separation from the world. It then took the form of cenobitism, or cloister life. These various classes of ascetics often manifested bitter jealousy toward one another. The tendency reached its ridiculous extreme in the Pillar Saints,

men who, desiring to separate themselves entirely from their fellow-men, made their homes on the tops of lofty pillars. The most famous of these was Simon Stylites, who lived for years on the top of a pillar sixty feet high and only a yard in diameter. In this way, he spent thirty-seven years. In Russia, in a damp dungeon and in unspeakable filth, I saw one of these wretched creatures who had spent thirty-three years in dampness, darkness, and dirt. Heathenism in India can surpass both the Roman and the Greek churches in giving examples of folly and filth on the part of their "holy" men. Ignorance and superstition of this character make religion repellent and abominable.

We are to bring our religion into our business, glorifying God in the performance of daily duty. He is a contemptible coward who claims to be a Christian and runs away from the world in the selfish task of saving his own little soul. Unfortunately, however, there are too many speckled birds in business. We must exalt the standards of honesty to the highest level. Dishonesty in business must be unsparingly condemned. Then it will be seen that it is possible to be earnest in business and fervent in spirit, and, at the same time, continue serving God. Thus, it will be seen that God is honored in our daily employments, while they are ennobled, exalted, and divinized by God's presence.



## SPECKLED BIRDS IN SOCIAL LIFE.

In this vast realm birds of this character abound. Probably in no other sphere does insincerity have larger opportunity. Men and women constantly appear other than they are in the rivalries of social ambition. This is the domain in which a noble womanhood should be regnant. Unfortunately the ambitions of many women excite the worst forms of cupidity on the part of some men. At this point speckled birds of the human variety have their opportunity. We have just read of the pitiful fact that starving Russian peasants are selling their daughters in order to buy food with the proceeds of the sale. These wretched moujiks are to be pitied as well as blamed. Some American parents virtually sell their daughters for European titles. The impoverished scions of ancient European houses are anxious to restore their dilapidated fortunes by giving their titles and their miserable selves to American heiresses whose consuming ambition it is to secure these ancient titles. This is the great opportunity for the speckled bird of the human variety of both sexes. American women, in some cases, have given up their country, their wealth, their religion, and their womanhood to contemptible cads lacking intelligence, industry, gratitude, manliness, and every other virtue. It is to be hoped that recent events have taught American women, and

especially American fathers and mothers, lessons which they will not readily forget. We must raise the standards of social life. Our sons and daughters must learn the duties of industry, economy, intelligence, religion, and all homely and wholesome virtues. These are nobler ambitions than a so-called brilliant marriage which is often only another name for unsanctified ambition on the one side, and unpardonable avarice on the other. The women in these cases, with their desire for titles, are as truly speckled as are the avaricious, mercenary, and meretricious men themselves.

#### SPECKLED BIRDS IN POLITICAL LIFE.

Not all men in political life are proper subjects of unfavorable criticism. Some of these men are as clean-handed, clear-headed, and pure-hearted as are any men in any circle of life. The science of politics is worthy the study and practice of the noblest men. In its widest range, it is the science and art of government; it is the theory and practice of attaining the ends for which civil society is organized. We ought never to conceive of religion as necessarily opposed to politics. A true religion goes with a man to the primary, to the platform, and to the ballot-box. Patriotism is an important element in religion, and religion must be the spine and soul of patriotism. In his union of patriotism and religion, the ancient Hebrew has given us an example and an

ideal for our modern life. Our best men ought to be exhorted to perform their political duties; really the men who neglect their political duties are not our best men. The true religionist will be the good citizen. The political pool will always be soiled if good men fail to perform their political duties; bad men make a living by keeping the political pool dirty.

The speckled birds in politics assume any political color and profess any political creed which may serve their purpose in securing votes. They are chameleons in their extraordinary faculty for changing their political or religious color in order to win popular favor. Their cowardice is often equaled only by their ambition. They are willing to arouse the worst feelings of social caste and religious bigotry, if thereby they can attain their own ends. These speckled political birds ought to be spotted by all true patriots. Sooner or later they find their low level among men. In the long run, honesty, sincerity, and patriotism will win the highest political honors. The evident sincerity of Governor Hughes was greatly potent in securing his election. Sincerity is a well-nigh irresistible force in politics, as in all the other relations of life. The trimmer, time-server, and turn-coat is despised by all patriots of whatever political creed. The speckled birds in politics are rightly pecked at by political men of all parties.

The standard is higher to-day than ever before in American political life; it is much higher than it was in the days of Washington and in the presidencies which immediately followed his time. There are, indeed, shameful political grafters in our day. They must be discovered; they will be discovered, despised, pilloried, and otherwise punished. They will be elected to a social and political limbo, whence they will never emerge to dishonor their country and to degrade manhood with their dishonest acts and their dishonored names.

#### SPECKLED BIRDS IN RELIGIOUS LIFE.

Unfortunately birds of this feather are not wanting in the religious world. There are men and women who wish to serve God and Satan without offending either. Recently a religious tramp said to a pastor to whom he came for a gratuity, "I have been greatly helped by your ministry. When I came to your church I cared for neither God nor the devil; now I have learned to love both." He was a type of many churchmen. The Apostle James tells us that, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." The word translated "double-minded," really describes a man with two souls, two wills, two hearts—one for God and one for the world. Of course, such a man is unstable in all his ways; he is drawn hither and thither by contending desires, passions, and

ambitions. In the Twelfth Psalm and the second verse we have the words, "With a double heart do they speak." The literal rendering of the Hebrew is "With a heart and a heart." Naturally these two hearts produced inconsistency and hypocrisy. A man with two hearts is unworthy of our confidence and affection. In 1 Chronicles 12 : 33, we read of "Fifty thousand men who could keep rank; they were not of double heart." The last phrase literally rendered is, "Who were not of a heart and a heart." They did not have one heart for the home and another heart for the battle; their heart was one for their king and their country. Churchmen are found to-day striving to serve God and Mammon, Christ and Satan; they have one heart for the world, the flesh, and the devil; and another heart for religion, the church, and God. Such men must be unstable. Balaam was one of those men with two hearts, Simon Magus was another, Ananias was still another; unfortunately men of this type are still found both in the church and in the world. They can have neither real happiness nor good influence in their religious profession. They are like Pilate who acknowledged the entire innocence of Jesus, and yet in the same breath proposed to punish him as guilty. They are like the mongrel colonists whom Shalmaneser, after he had desolated parts of Israel, transplanted into the cities of Samaria from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and

Sepharvaim. These mixed peoples, "Feared Jehovah and served their gods!" From the intermixture of these colonists with natives who remained in the territory came the Samaritans, who are called Cuthites in the Chaldee and the Talmud. These mongrels feared God lest he should send his lions to slay them; they feared God, but worshiped their own gods. Such men are contemptible in all ages and in all religions. Heroic decision is honorable and attractive wherever found; vacillation and hypocrisy are contemptible in every creed. These speckled birds excite mingled pity and derision. Archdeacon Hare's visit to Rome awakened solicitude on the part of his Protestant friends, lest his love for ecclesiastical art should incline him unduly toward the service and faith of the Roman Church. Their fears were entirely groundless. The visit made him a stronger Protestant than before. He explained his firmer faith by saying, "I saw the pope, apparently kneeling in prayer for mankind; but I discovered that the legs were artificial. The pope was all the while seated in his chair." The discovery of this hypocritical formalism confirmed him as never before in his Protestant faith. We need to be the type of Christians which Mr. Moody once described, as "O and O Christians—Out and Out Christians." If religion is worth anything it is worth everything. God help us to drive out the speckled birds from our religious creeds and deeds!

Our religion must go with us into all the relations of life. It must sweep through, control, and glorify every duty in life, or it is a religion not worth having. It should manifest its power in the marts of trade as truly as in the sanctuary of God. Religion is not for sanctuaries and Sundays alone, but for the activities of business and the duties of social life every day in the week. It is not to be put on and off as are our Sunday garments. It is to be the dominant motive of our entire lives. It is not to find its chief confession under the cathedral's fretted roof, but in the lowly walks of daily life. Sublimar deeds of heroism have been performed in quiet homes and in business offices than were ever achieved by mailed warrior on fierce battle-fields. I love to look at Old Trinity, as she stands in majestic silence, pointing with her stony finger to the skies. Every business house and every home should teach a similar lesson. Let us live for duty, for truth, and for God, and thus shall we make earth a foretaste of heaven, and wear our victorious crown even while we are in the dusty conflict of daily life and lowly duty.

## XVI

### THE MARRED VESSEL

*Text : And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter; so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it.—Jer. 18 : 4.*

JEREMIAH, as has been repeatedly said in these sermons, was a great preacher. Like him who was the greatest of all preachers, Jesus Christ, Jeremiah often spoke in parables. We thus have before us what is really the Parable of the Potter. Jeremiah showed his greatness as a preacher by his attentiveness as a hearer of the word of the Lord. He was thus commanded to go to the house of the potter, not to preach a sermon, but to get materials for the preparation of a sermon. All preachers would do well, in preparing sermons, to come into close touch with workmen of a high order. A workman of the highest class is always an object of great interest, and his work is a genuine inspiration to the true preacher. There is a remarkable fascination in seeing a first-class workman, whatever may be the nature of his employment, doing his work. A great factory is often a good place for the preparation of good homilies. The preacher's head and heart



alike will be instructed and inspired by coming into close touch with honest, earnest, and masterful workmen.

The true preacher

Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,  
Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

Jeremiah, by watching a skilful potter performing his work, was to receive a message from the Lord to be delivered to the people. He was not disobedient to the heavenly command. He, therefore, immediately went to the potter's house and he there carefully observed how the potter wrought his work on the wheel with ease and speed. While he watched a lump of clay which the potter designed to form into a certain shape, he saw that the designed vessel was sadly marred. This result came about either because the clay was too soft or too hard, or had a stone in it, or because of some other potent reason. The design of the potter was thus defeated. What did the potter next attempt? Jeremiah watched him closely, and discovered that he suddenly changed his mind, crushed the marred vessel into a shapeless mass of mud, and, beginning anew, soon made out of this mud quite another vessel.

A few words about potters and pottery will clarify our thought. The art of pottery is most ancient. It is true modern Arab culinary vessels are made usually of wood or copper; but it is

certain that in the wilderness the Hebrews used earthenware vessels. Doubtless, they had learned the potter's trade while in Egypt. Mural paintings fully illustrate the Egyptians manufacturing potters' vessels. The clay was trodden by men's feet and thus it formed an adhesive paste; the potter then placed it on the wheel beside which he sat and whose revolutions he controlled, and with his deft hands he shaped the clay into the desired vessel. The wheel was probably introduced into Palestine from Egypt. A smaller disk was placed on the larger one and turned either by the hand or the foot. Earthen vessels were used for many purposes both in Egypt and in Palestine. At Jerusalem there was a royal establishment of potters; from the fragments rejected in the process of manufacture, it is likely that the "Potters Field" received its name. Earthen vessels are first distinctly mentioned in the case of the pitchers in which Gideon's men concealed their lamps. Bottles are mentioned earlier; but, in most cases, it is likely that the bottle was of skin. The fragility of the potter's wares supplies apt emblems of the brevity of human life; it is this figurative use of the potter's vessels which is the most frequently noticed in Scripture.

The reference to the potter's wheel in connection with the text is the only time in which it is mentioned in the Bible, although it is certain that it must have been long in use before this allusion

was made. Both in Egypt and Palestine the traveler may still see what is here described. Indeed, the making of earthen vessels is a striking feature of Eastern life. Even when finished these vessels are often broken by the lightest stroke. The stubbornness of a donkey may break all the jars in which you had expected to return from the well with an abundant supply of water. The common pottery is so cheap that even the poor often break it in contempt or anger, or throw it aside as being unclean if it has been used by persons of another social caste or religious faith.

Jeremiah's reference is, of course, to the vessel before it is baked in the oven. The potter was turning the wheel with hand or foot when, through some defect in the clay or some awkward movement on his own part, his work was marred; he then immediately turns the clay to another use. This incident from the domestic life of this ancient time is full of interest and instruction. It is not intended now to discuss the words in their setting; these words, in the Parable of the Potter, will be taken in their application to human life and its important work.

#### A PLAN FOR EVERY LIFE.

This text clearly teaches that God has a plan for every life, a pattern for every character, an ideal for every soul. God is the Almighty Potter; and, in one sense, we are but clay in his

hands. There is some definite, desirable, and beautiful ideal which God wishes us to realize. All men's lives are in God's hands. In Isaiah, 45:5, God says of Cyrus, "I girded thee, though thou hast not known me." This is striking language. It is as if God had said, "I placed on thee the military belt, and prepared thee for war and conquest." Men who are strangers to God are often employed by God to accomplish his providential plans. Thus he raised up Cyrus on account of the Hebrew people. In a sense, Cyrus was the Lord's anointed, as we learn from the first verse of this same chapter. This does not mean that Cyrus was a worshiper of the true God; but it means that God had set him apart to perform a most important public service. The title here given to Cyrus is one of appointment to office rather than one expressive of holiness of character. He was God's instrument in the accomplishment of the vast designs of God among the nations. All nations and kings are in God's hand. In this sense he called Nebuchadnezzar his servant, the staff of his indignation, and the rod of his anger. God doeth according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. He changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings and setteth up kings. He maketh the wrath of men to praise him and the remainder of wrath he restrains.

All through the centuries God assigns special

functions to different nations. The Hebrew people were set apart especially to develop the idea of religion; they had an innate genius for religion. They were not leaders in science or art; their religious principles forbade them to make images of things in heaven or on the earth. All their relations to God tended to the development of their distinctively religious ideas. This was their one great function among the nations. Among idolatrous peoples Judaism was like an oasis in a desert. This remarkable people was chosen to stand among the idolatrous nations as the bearer of the knowledge of Jehovah. The Holy Land itself, though surrounded by the great nations of ancient culture, was so separated from them by deserts south and east as to secure to the Mosaic religion freedom for its full development. The Greeks stood for the development of art to the fullest degree. The religion of Greece was an artistic product of the imagination; it has been called the religion of beauty. The religion of the Hebrew illustrated the beauty of holiness. The religion of Greece was an illustration of the holiness of beauty. The Romans stood for the idea of the State and of civil law; they united the nations in a colossal empire, stretching from the Euphrates to the Atlantic, and from the deserts of Libya to the banks of the Rhine. They believed that they were called to govern the world. God overruled their wolf-like rapacity and their

boundless ambition for the triumph of his kingdom. The Anglo-Saxon to-day possesses many of the qualities of these three great races of antiquity, the religion of the Hebrew, the art of the Greek, and the law of the Roman. Just as the Hebrew carried his pure monotheism around the Mediterranean, so the Anglo-Saxon seems to be chosen of God to carry true civilization and Christianity around the world. Thus God has his plan for each nation and for every individual soul.

#### GOD'S PLAN MAY BE MARRED.

A second lesson taught by this text is that our life may be marred in the making. We may utterly fail to realize God's ideal. We recognize at once that there is a great difference, almost an infinite difference, between us and a lump of clay. That is passive, powerless, helpless in the hands of the potter. It has no power of will, no liberty of choice, no possibility of decision. We are not clay. We were made in the image of God. We have some likeness to God. His image is defaced, but not effaced. It is our glorious, but also our terrible, prerogative that we are endowed with the power of choice. We can oppose the Divine Potter. We can joyously submit to God, or we may wickedly oppose God. Weak and wicked men may say, "No," to the mighty and holy God.

We may say with reverence that God imposed upon himself a task difficult of accomplishment when he created man. He had to choose between making us men or machines. A machine can neither perform acts of virtue nor deeds of vice. An inalienable characteristic of man is freedom. If there is no freedom, there is no manhood; and if there is no manhood, there is neither virtue nor vice. God made us free moral agents; within certain limits we may possess somewhat of the freedom of God himself. We have chosen to use this freedom against God; this is our terrible sin. It is useless for us to chase Adam up and down the centuries with objurgations and maledictions. In a very real sense, every man is his own Adam. Every man may stand or fall for himself and for others. Men can say "No" to God, and "Yes" to Satan. We can mar God's gracious design in our life; we can even defeat God's blessed purpose in our life. When we sin, we make sad work of God's plan in the health of the body and in the nobility and divineness of the soul. These are tremendously solemn truths; they lay hold of an eternal destiny. The law that whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap is voiceful with the authority of God, and is universal and eternal as God himself. Every man, under God, is the architect of his own fortune. Every man who shall be lost will be the author of his own eternal condemnation. God never sent and

never will send a man to perdition; every man will go to his own place. Every man will inherit the destiny which, in his deepest nature, he desires and for which he has prepared himself in his life and character. This fact will be the bitterest drop in the cup of eternal remorse.

#### THE MARRED LIFE RESTORED.

A third truth taught in this text is that a life marred may be restored—"so he made it again another vessel." This is an inspiring and blessed truth. The marred life will never again be what it might have been and what it ought to have been. It is said with deepest reverence that even God himself cannot fully restore a marred life. It is sometimes supposed that God's grace is peculiarly manifested when a great sinner is saved, when a man is lifted from the gutter and placed among God's redeemed children. Far be it from me to depreciate the grace of God in such a conversion; but God's grace is vastly more honored when boys and girls are converted to Christ in their sweet childhood before they have gone down into the awful depths of sin. It is ten thousand pities that the potter's vessel was ever marred; it is ten thousand pities that men should ever know the degradation of sin by a personal experience. How much sweeter, cleaner, purer, and diviner their lives had they never served sin and Satan.

But it is better that a life should be saved



though marred than that it should be utterly lost. God will not throw your marred life away if you bring it to him to be mended. You may have failed to realize your noblest possibilities and your highest ideals; you may have added failure to failure in your struggles toward noble attainment, nevertheless you may bring your marred life as it is to God to be restored. He is waiting to be gracious; he desires to give you another chance. God will never turn away from any man, woman, or child who cries out to him for help. He bends from his throne to listen to the suppliant's cry; he reaches out a hand tender as a mother's and yet mighty as God's to lift to his heart every penitent who seeks his mercy and grace.

Last summer, at one of the great Chautauqua Assemblies, I had the opportunity of hearing Mr. Bilhorn, the famous evangelistic singer. One of his most effective solos is Hezekiah Butterworth's little poem, entitled, "The Bird with a Broken Wing." The bird with a broken wing was found in a woodland meadow; it received tender care and made progress toward complete restoration. But the wound was still there and its sad effects never could be forgotten, nor could they be obliterated. Thus Mr. Bilhorn sang:

I healed its wound, and each morning  
It sang its sweet old strain;  
But the bird with the broken pinion  
Never soared as high again.

Then the song told of a broken life and its second chance :

I found a young life, broken  
By sin's seductive art;  
And, touched with a childlike pity,  
I took him to my heart.

He lived with a noble purpose,  
And struggled not in vain;  
But the life that sin had stricken  
Never soared as high again.

But the bird with a broken pinion  
Kept another from the snare;  
And the life that sin hath stricken  
Raised another from despair.

. . . . .

But the soul that comes to Jesus  
Is saved from every sin,  
And the heart that fully trusts Him  
Shall a crown of glory win.

Then come to the dear Redeemer  
He'll cleanse you from every stain;  
By his wonderful love and mercy  
You shall surely rise again.

The broken life may yet be a most useful life; though marred by sin, it may, by divine grace, be made over for blessed service here, and for celestial glory hereafter. All along the pages of church history, from the days of the apostles to John Bunyan and Jerry McAuley, there shine with undimmed splendor the names of men divinely restored to

good and God from the ways of sin and Satan. Take courage, O man, if your life is broken; there is healing for you in Jesus Christ. He was the divine Physician; He was the Friend of publicans and sinners; he came to seek and to save that which was lost. I offer you now, in his name, divine healing without money and without price. Take it, I beseech you, and live in all the future for the good of men and for the glory of God. Then, amid saints and seraphs, you will one day sing, out of a joyous and blessed experience, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

## XVII

### THE SILLY DOVE

*Text : Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.—Hosca 7 : 11.*

EPHRAIM was the second son of Joseph, and his mother was Asenath. His birth occurred during the seven plenteous years, and possibly this fact is implied in the meaning of his name. At the time of the exodus the tribe of Ephraim alone consisted of over forty thousand persons, but upon entering Canaan the numbers were reduced to but little over thirty-two thousand; while the numbers of Manasseh increased to over fifty-two thousand from thirty-two thousand at the time of the exodus. The Ephraimites were always characterized by a haughty and domineering spirit; this spirit was manifested especially toward the great tribe of Judah. The rivalry between these tribes became marked after the establishment of the monarchy. When the tribe of Judah produced so great a king in the person of David, the pride and jealousy of Ephraim were thoroughly aroused. When David established his court at Jerusalem and removed the ark thither, thus making his native Judah the seat both of the theocratic and civil

government, the alienation of the Ephraimites and their desire for supremacy became still more marked. The temple of Solomon increased the spirit of alienation; later, however, the rivalry between the two tribes became rivalry between the two kingdoms; and still later the history of Ephraim was virtually the history of the kingdom of Israel. The predominance of Ephraim was so great that the whole realm was called by its name, the kingdom of Israel consisting largely of this tribe. Ephraim thus became synonymous with Israel.

Earlier in this chapter it is said that "Ephraim is a cake not turned." One side of such a cake is raw dough, and the other side is a burnt crust. Ephraim had introduced much of the superstition and idolatry of the heathen into his religious worship; he was thus neither fish nor flesh; the people worshiped calves at Dan and Bethel, and yet swore by the name of the Lord. They were like the mongrel colonists who inhabited Samaria in after times; they feared the Lord, yet served their own gods. In the text it is affirmed that "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart."

The dove is the symbol of so much that is gentle and beautiful, that this comparison seems somewhat unwelcome in this connection; the comparison, however, is limited to certain qualities of the dove, of which mention will be made later. When these qualities are held in mind, the appropriateness of the comparison will be entirely evident.

The dove is first mentioned in the Bible when it appears as Noah's second messenger sent forth to ascertain whether or not the waters had abated. It is alluded to in various psalms and other Scriptures for the rapidity of its flight, the beauty of its plumage, its dwelling in the rocks, its harmlessness and simplicity, its mournful voice, and its affectionateness. The dove symbolizes the Holy Spirit and was especially honored in this respect in connection with the baptism of Jesus. It was also the harbinger of reconciliation with God, as was seen with reference to the mission on which it was sent by Noah. The dove was a national emblem on the standards of Syria and Phœnicia; in this representation it was considered to be a symbol of divinity. With this significance it has had a large place in legend, folk-lore, and religious symbolism among many nations. It has entered into the names of women, especially in the Orient, as descriptive of peculiar loveliness. The name of the legendary queen of Assyria, Semiramis, is said to mean "mountain dove," and the dove became the ensign of her army. The dove appears alike in the pagan worship of ancient Europe and in early Christian art as a religious symbol of great significance. Among the Jews, it was from the earliest time the type of innocence, and among the Greeks and Romans, from the Olympian age, it was the symbol of natural and noble love. A volume might be written on the place of the dove

in Christian art. All visitors to Venice will recall the veneration in which doves are held as they are seen in the far-famed Piazza of Saint Mark, and all who are in any way familiar with the religious habits of Russian moujiks will recall the sacredness in which they hold the dove as an incarnation of deity.

#### THE CONTEXT.

A glance at the context will make clear the meaning of Hosea's comparison. In the earlier part of the chapter, we have the charge against the people of Israel that they had been guilty of high crimes against God, and so had prevented the bestowment of favors which he had intended to grant. The people were sick and wounded; their disease was dangerous and malignant. God was willing to be their Physician, and there was healing balm in Gilead; but the people rejected all forms of divine help. When God would grant them aid, they became the more notorious in their wickedness. So far from being healed, they suffered from fresh wounds inflicted upon them by spoilers and robbers. The king, princes, and judges had all grievously erred. The people pleased Jero-boam by readily adopting his measures, and heartily agreeing with him in his idolatry. Most striking is Hosea's comparison of the Israelites to an oven and to dough. The kings, however, suffered for their idolatry, four of them having fallen in

the time of this prophet; and all who thus came to an untimely end were idolaters. Unspeakably sad was the story of Israel's departure from God, and her punishment on account of her apostasy. The people joined with profane scoffers and practical atheists in opposing God. Those who ought to have been leaders in righteousness were foremost in wickedness. These were the conditions which prevailed in high places, and the rank and file of the people were no better. They conformed to the customs of the idolatrous people by whom they were surrounded. Gray hairs were upon Ephraim, and he knew it not. The people were in a state of a silly old man who does not appreciate his infirmities; and yet they would not apply to the sovereign Physician to heal their spiritual diseases. Thus, in the text, it is said, "Ephraim also is like a silly dove without heart; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria." Our English word, silly, once really meant guileless, ingenuous and even blessed; it has its root in the German *selig*, blessed; it is another form of the early English word "seely," meaning innocent, artless, happy. The term silly, therefore, in our text is not one of reproach, so far as the dove is concerned, but is rather expressive of innocence, guilelessness, helplessness, and impotence. In this sense the word silly has been applied to the child Christ, expressive of his innocence and holiness and absolute ingenuousness.



## THE DOVE'S THOUGHTLESSNESS.

In the Old version, the dove is described in the text as being "without heart"; the translation in the Revised version is "without understanding"; this is the correct translation. The dove is careless about its own young, and lives, apparently, without thought. Although her young may be taken from her, she will build her nest again in the same place, and then expose her young again to the same foes. She does not learn from past experience regarding future wisdom. By her innocence, she exposes herself to constant danger. Without the innocence of the dove, Israel manifested the silliness of the dove, in the modern sense of that term. Israel constantly called to Egypt and applied to Assyria for help. In striving to make these nations allies and friends, Israel showed that she was utterly without heart, completely lacking in sound understanding. These nations were her bitter rivals; in attaching herself to either one, Israel inevitably incurred the jealousy and hatred of the other. Israel was thus, like the silly dove, constantly falling into snares. Instead of keeping close to God and his worship, Israel sought help of heathen nations and thus won the displeasure of God and the contempt of these heathen peoples.

Men act with equal folly to-day. Sin is moral insanity; in a real sense, every man who persists

in sin is insane; he manifests the thoughtlessness of the dove. One charge, which God brought against his ancient people was this, "My people doth not consider." They showed less thoughtfulness than the ox that knew its owner and the ass that knew its master's crib. Isaiah thus declares that the people manifested a stupidity greater than that of the brute. A similar affirmation will apply to sinners in our day. In the Thirty-second Psalm, the second of the seven penitential psalms, the psalm which Augustine had written on the wall over against his sick bed, and which he constantly studied during his last illness, we have four words descriptive of four great evils. The first of these, in our English translation, is transgression; the Hebrew is *pesha*; this word, like our word transgression, signifies passing over a boundary. The second word is sin, the translation of the Hebrew word *chataah*. This Hebrew word, like the corresponding Greek word *amartia*, signifies the missing of a mark, a deflection from an aim, a failure to do our duty. The original meaning of the root of the Hebrew word calls our attention to the Benjamites who were said not to miss the mark by a hair's breadth. The man who is guilty of sin misses life's true target. He may shoot above it or below it, to the right of it or to the left of it; but he misses it and, missing it, fails to realize life's true ideal. The third word in the enumeration of the evils confessed in

the psalm under discussion is iniquity. The Hebrew for this word is *avon*. This signifies what is turned out of its proper course or position, what is morally distorted or perverted. Iniquity is contrary to equity. The fourth word is guile, this word being the translation of the Hebrew *remiyah*. This word signifies fraud, falseness, deceitfulness. Happy, indeed, is the man in whose spirit there is no guile. Men who are guilty of these evils manifest the silliness of the dove condemned by the prophet Hosea in the text. The word of God everywhere recognizes sinners as morally insane. This is the significance of the word fool, so often found in holy Scripture in connection with the commission of sin. Thus it was the fool who said in his heart, "There is no God." Professing themselves to be wise, men often became morally fools; claiming great clarity of thought, their understanding is darkened; boasting of their reason, they are, in the sight of truly wise men, of the holy angels, and of the great God, pitifully reasonless. Such men are aptly described by the silliness of the dove, in the later and more reprehensible meaning of that term.

#### THE DOVE'S BLINDNESS.

The silliness of the dove is seen in that she is easily enticed into the net by the tempting bait. She has no sense of the danger to which she is exposed. Some fowls seem

almost gifted with the power of reasoning; they readily discern their danger and promptly escape from the snare of the fowler. But the dove lacks discernment; she hasteth to the snare knowing not that it means the forfeiture of her life.

Just so did Israel in the case before us; they were constantly falling into the snares of neighboring nations. They did not discern the bait set for them by their idolatrous neighbors; they did not see that they would be betrayed by the Egyptians and utterly ruined by the Assyrians. To these nations they applied for help, when help could come only from God.

Men are equally foolish in our day. Conscious of sin which oppresses their lives, making them sometimes like the psalmist when he groaned all the day long, when his bones wasted away and his moisture was changed into the drought of summer, they will not go to God who could forgive their transgression and cover their sin. Some will seek refuge in atheism, denying the existence of God against whom they have sinned. Perhaps there never was an intellectual atheist; men become atheists in heart before they become atheists in head. It is an admirable remark of Plato in his *Laws* that "atheism is a disease of the soul before it becomes an error of the understanding." It is an equally excellent observation of Bacon that "A little philosophy inclineth men's minds to atheism, but depth in philosophy bringeth men's

minds to religion." Other men, when conscious of sin and weakness, resort to various forms of superstition. Superstition and atheism are often closely related. Men who cannot believe in God will often believe in ghosts and other gross superstitions. Superstition is a parody of true faith. Faith is founded on credible evidence; superstition is a belief on insufficient evidence or on no evidence whatever. In Mexico, in the province of Quebec, and in other countries where the Roman faith is dominant, even in the light of the twentieth century, certain monks by fasting, wearing chains, hair shirts, and by brutal flagellations of themselves, are striving to propitiate the justice of God and to secure peace for their own souls. They have been known to beat themselves until death came mercifully to relieve them from their self-inflicted torture. These men were looking to Egypt and Assyria for the forgiveness of their sins instead of obeying the command, "Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world." Buddhists, Hinduists, and disciples of heathenism generally, in the infliction of penance and in the effort to acquire merit by physical sufferings, outdo even Romanists in torturing their bodies with the hope of thus saving their souls.

#### THE DOVE'S SENSELESSNESS.

The silliness of the dove is seen also in that when she is frightened, she abandons the dove-

house and the protection of her owner, and flutters about from place to place, and thus becomes the sure prey of the spoiler. Israel showed a corresponding degree of stupidity; when exposed to danger, the people abandoned God's protection and sought help from the idolatrous neighbors and heathen deities. The Egyptians had been their implacable foes, having held their fathers in cruel bondage. The Assyrians were to be their masters in a captivity humiliating to Israel and dishonoring to God. By repentance and prayer they might have found hope and help in God. It is marvelous that when men have a God in heaven, they will seek help from their fellow-men who are equally weak and sinful with themselves. Once more it is to be affirmed that sin is moral insanity. This fact, however, does not relieve men from moral responsibility for their condition. Thank God, their condition is not unsavable; there is a curative balm, there is a divine Physician. Drunkenness is a disease in some cases, but it is, at the same time, a crime. In our just criticism of the liquor-seller, we must not fail to pass just condemnation on the liquor-drinker. We have often practically excused the drinker in our condemnation of the seller of intoxicants. Both are bad, and both must be blamed. When we say that a man is intoxicated, we have virtually affirmed that the man is poisoned, for the word intoxication comes from the Latin *in*, and *toxicum*, meaning

poison. A dipsomaniac reduces all his physical, mental, and moral powers; he also induces all forms of disease, but he is responsible at the outset both for the reduction of these powers and for the induction of these diseases. Only the grace of God can effectively make a new man out of the wretched creature thus destroyed by strong drink.

Others sources of help may be sought if the true source be penitently and earnestly invoked. Why should the drunkard like the silly dove, step into the net spread for the unwary? Why should he be so silly as not to escape manifest danger? Does he not know that in God's vocabulary sinner and fool are convertible terms? Does he not know that no drunkard can inherit the kingdom of heaven?

The average gambler excites our pity for his stupidity, while he evokes our blame for his criminality. The passion for gambling is more resistless than for strong drink. There is in mind, at this moment, a young man who constantly denied himself necessary food that he might have money with which to gamble. I saw on board the ship, which carried me from Honolulu to Yokohama, Chinese, who were returning to their own land, playing fan-tan until they had gambled all the earnings of years in America, their clothing, and, finally their wives. These wretched creatures, with the silliness of the dove, stepped with both feet

into the trap placed under their eyes. What fools these mortals be! Games of chance were forbidden by the Romans both under the republic and under the empire. The ground of the prohibition was the tendency of such practices to effeminate as well as to demoralize the men. It is remarkable that in England, as well as in Rome, this was the ground on which, in the early days, games were forbidden. Fortunately in the United States, as well as in England to-day, a gambling house is indictable as a common nuisance; and one who wins another's money with false dice is punishable as a common-law cheat. It would be well if a similar public sentiment could be aroused against bridge whist and other games which are played for money in the circles of church-members in our own day. It is almost inconceivable that in the circle of one's friends one may be robbed of his money as truly as if he were held up by footpads in some city slum. The man who is so robbed is a fool; and the man or woman robbing him is little, if anything, less than a thief. The man robbed manifests the silliness of the dove; the man or woman robbing him displays the predatory spirit of the hawk; and both are fools.

He who follows her whose steps take hold on hell manifests more than the stupidity of the dove that steps thoughtlessly into the net of the fowler. It is not necessary to enlarge upon this thought;



its application is, unfortunately, only too easily made.

There is help for all who turn with full purpose of heart unto God. His heart is tender as that of a mother, and his arm is mighty as that of the eternal Jehovah. Never did any man honestly and earnestly seek God in vain. He invites and entreats us to turn unto him, abandoning our own self-righteousness and all human help, and be saved with an everlasting salvation. He assures us that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Hear his own gracious call, his tender debate between justice and mercy; be astonished, O heavens, and wonder, O earth, at the glorious mercy and gracious tenderness of our God: "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." O unfilial sons, hear your Father's call! O prodigals, come back to your Father's home and Father's heart!

## XVIII

### THE HORNED HAND

*Text: He had horns coming out of his hand; and there was the hiding of his power.—Hab. 3 : 4.*

IT will not be denied that Habakkuk was one of the most distinguished of the minor prophets. We know nothing authoritative, however, of his birthplace, parentage, or life, except what may be learned from the book bearing his name, and from doubtful traditions. It is almost certain that he was a contemporary of Jeremiah, although a much younger man. Rabbinical writers assert that he was of the tribe of Levi, and they name different birthplaces. Many of the legends connected with his name are ridiculous in the extreme. Did we know all the facts of his life, it would be much easier to explain many of the images which he employs. To us his name is very odd, both in sound and in meaning. It probably comes from a root which means to caress or embrace, although some interpret it to mean a struggler, alluding to his pathetic zeal. The better meaning is that of an embracer. The name, with this significance, may have been given him when a child, and as expressive of his clinging to his

parents, or of their affection for him. The name may have been continued in his manhood as expressive of his clinging to God. He was most sensitive to the wrongs suffered by his nation. He was even almost disposed to question God's wisdom or love in his relations to Israel.

The book bearing his name contains but three short chapters. The first two chapters form the first part of the book. They deal with the threatened Chaldean invasion. In the first chapter, the prophet laments the sorrows which this terrible people would inflict on his guilty nation. In the second chapter, he predicts the humiliation which would come to these iniquitous conquerors. The third chapter forms the second part of the book; it is called, "A prayer of Habakkuk"; it is really a sublime lyrical ode, in which Habakkuk implores the help of Jehovah in view of his mighty deeds in the past history of Israel; and, at the same time, he expresses confidence that God will preserve his people and will execute vengeance on the foes of Israel. In this spirit of trust, he closes this triumphal and sublime ode. Did this third chapter belong to the book originally? This is an open question; but the tendency of many able scholars is to regard it as an independent poem of uncertain date. For originality and sublimity this ode may be safely placed in competition with the lofty thoughts and sublime expressions of psalms Eighteen and Seventy-eight.

Habakkuk is a writer of much beauty and power; his style has been always greatly admired. In this respect he takes rank with Joel, Amos, and Isaiah. Doubtless Isaiah influenced his literary style; but his writing is marked by a style and a force peculiarly his own. His figures are chosen with great taste and are drawn out with equal skill. His denunciations are terrible; but his consolations are correspondingly beautiful. Notwithstanding the boldness of his figures and the fervor of his imagination, his verse is pure and melodious. Dr. George Adam Smith calls attention to the fact that, although Habakkuk is called a prophet, he does not assume the attitude of the prophets. They address Israel on behalf of God; he addresses God on behalf of Israel. They rebuke the people for not submitting to God; he desires to know why God subjects the people to so much wrong from their foes. Others attacked the sins of the people; he attempts to solve the mysteries of divine providence. Why does God permit so much evil and sorrow? This is often the burden of his cry. He thus arouses our sympathy. He is near us; he asked questions which we ask to-day. He almost complains to God of his dealings with men. He is the Old Testament leader of the long line of men who, in all the centuries, have been perplexed by the unsolved and insoluble problems of human experience and of divine providence.

The book of Habakkuk produced a profound impression on the great Daniel Webster. He tells us, that when he was in Paris, he received an account of a French infidel who chanced to find, in a long-neglected drawer of his library, some stray leaves of a book with which he was quite unfamiliar. Even a rapid glance at the writing which he had thus discovered showed his trained mind that he had made a remarkable find. On these leaves was the third chapter of Habakkuk. This infidel had frequently denounced the Bible, although, like many other infidels, he knew but little of its contents. His fine literary taste was at once arrested by the sublime ode which constitutes this third chapter. It evoked his admiration for its unique excellence. He hastened to his club to announce its discovery. He read aloud the words he had found; all were charmed. With one voice they asked for the name of the gifted author. The discoverer of the leaves with great pleasure informed his *confrères* "that the writer was named Habakkuk," and he added, "of course, a Frenchman." Judge of his surprise and that of his fellow-members when they learned that the ode which they so greatly admired was a part of the Bible which they so constantly derided. I have given the substance of the statement attributed to Webster. He is quoted as adding, "This chapter I regard as one of the sublimest passages of inspired literature; and often have I wondered that

some artist, equal to the task, had not selected the prophet and his scene of desolation as the subject of a painting."

We have seen that this third chapter is an ode or a rhapsody. The use of the musical sign, "Selah," would imply that it was used as a part of a public liturgy. The style and temper of the third chapter are markedly different from those of the preceding chapters. In them the prophet speaks for himself; in the third chapter it is really the nation of Israel that addresses God. The chapter is a sudden burst of poetry of the sublimest character. The prophet employs all the powers of native genius and of divine inspiration in the production of this masterly lyric. That he may the more fully encourage the people in the midst of present disasters, he recites former displays of God's infinite power and glory. Thus he suggests the deliverance from Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the wilderness journey, and the glorious manifestations of God's power on Mount Sinai when the law was given amid scenes of unparalleled splendor. He gives us a description of a theophany, or actual appearance of God, to men. It is not too much to say that this is one of the sublimest representations of magnificent events in the Bible or in any literature. One will search long in the writings of poets, ancient or modern, before he will find a description so majestic and sublime.

God is represented as coming from Teman, a city and capital of the province of Idumea, to the south of the land of Canaan. The Holy One came from Mount Paran, a city which gave its name to a province in Arabia Petrea. God's brightness in this appearance was dazzling as the light; and from his hand there came out, according to the rendering of the Common version, horns. By the word horns, without doubt, we ought to understand rays or beams of light; the idea is that rays flashed forth from his hand in bright coruscations like lightnings. The Revised version renders it, "He had rays coming forth from his hand." Rays of light suggest horns, and thus the word has been misunderstood and translated horns. When Moses returned from his communion with God, we read, Exodus 34:29, he "wist not that the skin of his face shone"; he is thus represented as emitting from his face beams of light. Having been long in intimate communion with God, his very flesh was radiant with divine glory; he seemed to be transfigured by the divine splendor in which he had dwelt. The Hebrew word, *karan*, means to shine out, to dart forth, as horns from the head of an animal, or as rays of light from a highly polished surface. The Vulgate renders the passage, if it is pardonable for the moment to introduce a Latin phrase, *et ignorabat quod cornuta esset facies sua*—"and he did not know that his face was horned." This

translation of the Hebrew by the Vulgate has utterly misled sculptors and painters who relied on that version for their information of the Hebrew original. It thus came to pass that Michael Angelo put horns upon his famous Moses—without doubt the greatest colossal statue in modern art. He portrays Moses at the moment when filled with righteous wrath he denounces the sin of the Israelites because of their idolatry and threatens them with destruction. The blunders of the Vulgate translation so misled Angelo as to make this feature of his work laughable.

The idea of representing the Deity as flashing forth rays of light is found in classic descriptions of Jupiter; thus he is called Jupiter Keraunos, or Jupiter Brontes. In these connections he is represented with forked or zigzag lightnings in his hand. The custom of adorning the head of Christ and the saints with a nimbus has its origin in a similar conception. It is not at all improbable that this heathen idea regarding Jove is indebted for its origin to this biblical description of a theophany on Mount Sinai.

#### REVEALMENTS AND CONCEALMENTS OF GOD.

This description of the theophany as given in the text suggests both manifestations and inevitable concealments in the divine nature. Most suggestive are the words following the statement of the flashing forth of rays of light from God's



hand, "and there was the hiding of his power." Grand and sublime as were these displays of his power, compared with what it is in itself, these manifestations were rather concealments than revelations of that power.

How does God reveal himself? He has two great bibles—the book of creation and the volume of revelation. Both tell of his wisdom, power, and glory. They are really different chapters in one great volume. They never contradict each other in any of their revelations. Our interpretation of their revelations may be contradictory, but the revelations themselves, rightly understood, are harmonious. The bible of nature is the unwritten bible; that of Scripture is the written Bible. Of the bible of nature Young, in his "Night Thoughts," says:

'Tis elder Scripture writ by God's own hand—  
Scripture authentic; uncorrupt by man.

The bible of nature abounds in mystery; it conceals as truly as it reveals the great Creator. In nature is the hiding of God's power. We know nothing fully; did we know anything fully we might know everything completely. The infinitely small, as well as the infinitely great, is wrapped in mystery; the microscope and the telescope suggest more mysteries yet concealed than they have revealed. What is electricity? Who can tell? We say that it is an imponderable and visible agent

producing various manifestations of energy, and that it is generally rendered active by some molecular disturbance. We use it as a name denoting an important case of phenomena, of attraction and repulsion, and of chemical decomposition. But its true nature is not understood; at that point Mr. Edison knows no more than a mere tyro in the rudiments of electrical science. We really know nothing more as to the nature of electricity than did Benjamin Franklin, when, in 1752, he made his celebrated experiments with the kite, and demonstrated the identity of lightning and electricity.

What is gravitation? Who can tell? We can glibly say that it is the force with which all bodies attract one another, that the tendency of every particle of matter in the universe is toward every other particle; and we can affirm that its force is inversely as the square of the distance. But do we really know any more concerning the nature of gravitation than did Sir Isaac Newton when, in 1687, he demonstrated the laws of attraction and gravitation? Even the familiar facts of science are as profoundly mysterious as the revelations of religion. If men were to say regarding natural phenomena that they would neither believe nor practise what they could not understand, their deeds would be few and their creeds would be short.

We are on the eve of formulating the laws of

telepathy; we shall yet explain how the action of one mind on another at a distance and without the use of words, looks, or gestures, is exercised. The "televue," the instrument by which, when conversing over the telephone, we may see the face of our interlocutor, will soon be an actuality. Conversation with Mars and the moon may yet be a reality.

History is another witness for God revealing and, at the same time, concealing his power and glory. What is history? It is not easy to give a satisfactory definition of this familiar word. Much that passes as history is merely annals or chronicles. Xenophon's "Anabasis" and Cæsar's "Commentaries" are admirable examples of pure narrative. Strictly speaking, they are not history. Herodotus was the first great narrator, Thucydides was the first historian who had a philosophical conception of history, and Polybius carried out his idea to fuller completion. In the Middle Ages, with an occasional partial exception, there was almost no progress toward a philosophy of history. In 1567 Jean Bodin announced the proposition that the course of historic events is controlled by definite laws; this was, at that day, a proposition of immense importance. Bossuet made some progress in the same direction, although his work was not much more than an improvement on the "*De Civitate Dei*" of Augustine. The true father of the idea of a philosophy of history was the Italian,

Vico; his new science, published in 1725, gave an example of the science of events, whose possibility Bodin had suggested. It will not be doubted that the germ of Vico's philosophy of history is found in a passage in Plato's "Republic." We now have fully developed the idea that there is a science, a philosophy of history. This conception controls our definition of history. We now see that it is a systematic narration of events with philosophic inquiries respecting causes and effects; we thus distinguish it from annals and chronicles. Bolingbroke says, "I have read somewhere or other—in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, I think—that history is philosophy teaching by example." History has been called "the conscience of the human race"; and also "the prophetic interpreter of that most sacred epic of which God is the poet and Humanity the theme." We may say, with truth, that history is the unfolding in time of the eternal purposes of the Almighty.

In its relation to Jesus Christ, we may say with literal truth that history is "his story." History is thus both a revealment and a concealment of God. No man can write a philosophical history except he recognize in it the presence and power of Jesus Christ. As well might a man attempt to write a treatise on astronomy and leave out the sun. Jesus Christ is the sun of the moral universe. All the light of secular, as truly as of sacred, story gathers round the cross of Jesus Christ.

Revelation, using the word in its technical sense, is a still fuller manifestation of God. There is no contradiction between true science and divine revelation. Science is knowledge properly systematized; science is revelation, so far as it goes. Natural religion and revealed religion are but parts of one religion. This truth is superbly brought out in the Nineteenth Psalm. While it is true that "the heavens declare the glory of God," it is sublimely true that "the law of the Lord is perfect." The psalmist gives us in this connection a majestic personification of day and night. Day calls to his successor day; and night whispers to her successor night. We have here, as Dr. G. D. Boardman eloquently says: "Nature's ceaseless anthem of phone and antiphone; deep calling unto deep, at the daily swing of God's pendulum."

When we come to this part of the verse, we feel that we are breathing the air of heaven and that our feet are standing on an adamantine pavement of eternal truth. In creation we see God's hand; in revelation we see God's heart. In creation God is Former and Preserver; in revelation God is Father and Redeemer. All modern scholarship so far as it is truly scientific and reverent, shows that knowledge of God is streaming forth from the divine word; it also shows, as John Robinson said, in his memorable farewell sermon, July 22, 1620, on the embarkation from Leyden of the first pilgrims for America, that more light is yet to

break forth from God's word. There are difficulties in God's word. Did it not contain difficulties, we might doubt that it is God's word. The difficulties, however, are not more numerous than they are in science. The greatest scientist is, after all, only a sciolist. The blunders of science are more conspicuous than the mistakes of biblical scholars. If a man knew God exhaustively, that man would be God. He who takes a lowly place as a pupil at the Master's feet, is preparing himself for the highest place in the noblest of all sciences, the science of salvation.

The glory of revelation culminates in the redemption which we may have in Jesus Christ. Toward him all Bible revelations tend; he is their sublime goal; he is the heart of the universe and the soul of the Bible. In him we see the face and heart of God. In him we see God. The human heart cries out for the living God; only a living God can satisfy the immortal longings of a living man. Philip voiced the heart of humanity when he said to Jesus Christ, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." Jesus Christ voiced both the revealments and concealments of creation, history, revelation, and redemption when he said to Philip, "He that hath seen me, hath seen the Father." God grant us the unspeakable joy and divine benediction of beholding him in Jesus Christ, his holy Son, and our divine Lord and Master!

## XIX

### THE EARTH-HELPED WOMAN

*Text: And the earth helped the woman, and the earth opened her mouth, and swallowed up the river which the dragon cast out of his mouth.—Rev. 12 : 16.*

AT first blush this text seems very obscure but it becomes plain when we discover the meaning of its terms. The woman and the dragon are without doubt, mystical personages. The dragon is interpreted for us in the context and is the devil. By the woman we are to understand the church of God. She is pursued by the demon who ejects from his mouth a river of water; we might expect that the woman would thus be utterly overwhelmed. But when the danger seemed so imminent, the earth opened its mouth and swallowed up the river, and thus the woman was saved. What is meant here by the earth? In answer we may say that it means the forces of nature; in a word, it means science.

There is a great variety of opinions regarding the interpretation of the persecution of the woman by the dragon. Does it refer to the persecution by the Jews which followed the beginning of the Christian era? Is the reference to the Roman

armies which seemed likely utterly to destroy Christianity, after the overthrow of the Jewish nation? Does it refer to the influence of pagan philosophies which had been carried over into Christianity and which, at various times, threatened to engulf the new faith? It is not necessary to decide between these various suppositions. In the full sense, the conflict is between evil and good, light and darkness, Satan and Christ. In this conflict so fiercely waged, a true science and the true church are on the same side. True science and true religion are not foes, but friends. Many religionists have erred in making science and religion enemies rather than allies. The Nineteenth Psalm clearly teaches us that there is no conflict between natural and revealed religion. When science and religion are both rightly interpreted, they are seen to be perfectly harmonious; they are but different chapters in God's great book of revelation. It is worth much to both science and religion that this harmony should be clearly shown.

In its primary meaning, science is knowledge; but usually it denotes a systematic and orderly arrangement of knowledge; it is truth ascertained and classified. Science may be applied or pure. Applied science is a knowledge of facts and events as explained by means of causes and laws; pure science is the knowledge of these causes or laws considered as free from all applications.



## METHOD OF INVESTIGATION.

Science is helpful to religion by emphasizing the right method of investigation. The basal element in science, as truly as in religion, is faith. It is not possible to take a single step in science without the exercise of faith. Many men sneer at religion as being unscientific because faith is one of its essential features. These men show that they have never given careful study to elements inseparable from science. Such men are likely to be sciolists and not scientists, either in science or religion. Science cannot advance until it has by faith accepted certain axiomatic truths. Axioms lie at the entrance of every scientific path. An axiom is a self-evident truth or proposition. It is a proposition whose truth is so evident that no process of reasoning can make it plainer, *e. g.*, "the whole is greater than a part," "things which are equal to the same thing are equal to each other," "from nothing, nothing can come." In the science of geometry, the element of faith enters into many definitions. We speak of many sciences as exact, in opposition to religious doctrines; but, as a matter of fact, exactness cannot be affirmed even of familiar scientific definitions. We say that in geometry a point is that which has neither length, breadth, nor thickness; that it is that which has neither magnitude nor parts. We know perfectly well that our definition

is not absolutely correct; we are unable, however, probably to make it more exact. What is an atom? We know that it comes from a Greek word with an *a* meaning not, and the word, to cut; an atom therefore, is that which is uncut, that which is indivisible. It is a particle of matter so minute as not to admit of further division; it is the chemist's ultimate unit, the chemist's hypothetical particle of matter. These are definitions of ignorance rather than of knowledge. Did you ever see, feel, hear, or smell an atom? What does any man really know of an atom? An atom is conceivable, but not perceivable. We know atoms only by faith. Faith is a fundamental element in science as truly as in religion. What is a molecule? We know that it is the diminutive of the Latin *moles*, a mass. We can say that it is one of the invisible particles supposed to constitute matter of any kind; we may say that it is the smallest quantity of any elementary substance capable of existing in a separate form. But when we have said all these things, we have practically said nothing. In science, as truly as in religion, we walk by faith. There ought to be perfect harmony in motive and method of investigation between all true students of science and all devout disciples of religion. So far as both have freed their minds from cant and their methods from bigotry, they are seeking truth as their sublime and divine goal. Both should pursue their inquiries with lowliest reverence

for truth wherever found and by whatsoever messenger brought.

#### MATERIAL FURNISHED BY SCIENCE.

Science has greatly aided by furnishing material of importance in understanding the Bible. This is true in relation to many of the difficult doctrines of the Bible. Science has flashed light on the mysterious doctrine of the resurrection. The sublime reasoning of the Apostle Paul in First Corinthians, fifteenth chapter, is illuminated by many analogies in nature. The seed sown in the ground must die, and in its death there comes a new and nobler life. From the acorn buried in the earth, there comes eventually the monarch of the forest. The butterfly, with its wings of purple and gold in the summer's sun, was a little before a chrysalis, and a little before that but a crawling worm, and shortly before that an embryo in a tiny egg. Perhaps the resurrection of the body is not more inexplicable than the creation of the body. Science shows that nature abounds in analogies suggestive of the resurrection.

Science has done much to make it comparatively easy to believe in the existence of God. The Bible affirms that "God is light." Pythagoras said, with great suggestiveness, that if God were to make himself known to man his body would be light and his soul truth. There is an eternal fitness in seeing a close relation between God and

light. In harmony with this thought Christ said, "I am the light of the world." Light is that force in nature which, acting on the eye, produces the sense of vision.

There are two great theories of light. The first affirms that light is a material emanation thrown off by the luminous body, and that its particles constantly travel and fill the entire illuminated space, so long as the source continues unexhausted. This is called the emission, or corpuscular theory. It originated with Descarte, the founder of modern mechanical philosophy; but Newton was really the founder of this theory, as he developed the doctrines by which it was supported for more than a century. According to the second theory there is no transfer of matter from the source of light, but there is a transfer of force through the medium of an elastic fluid which fills all space, and molecules in this fluid transmit the disturbance by means of undulations. This is known as the undulatory theory. Many philosophers contributed to this theory, but Dr. Thomas Young, of England, 1801-1803, may be considered its founder. In its mysterious origin, wide diffusion, and beneficent effects, light certainly suggests God.

Science also throws much light on the question as to whether there was light before the sun. It is affirmed that there was light on the first day of creation, but we do not have an account of the

creation of the sun until we reach the fourth day. Many have asked, "How then could there have been light on the first day?" This apparent contradiction has embarrassed many Bible students. Petty infidels quickly seized upon these statements as if they were the product of crass ignorance on the part of the writer of the creation records. As early as the days of Celsus, who wrote about 150 A. D., this objection was urged to the Mosaic record. Science has come grandly to the aid of Bible interpreters. It is now known that the light-giving qualities of many bodies are due to their incandescence. Science has shown that there is a kind and degree of light apart from the sun, and that this chemical, or cosmical, light is conducive to the growth of vegetation. Science has shown that solids and liquids can emit light if they are capable of being heated to a certain degree. We know that fire-flies and certain kinds of wood throw out light. The nebular hypothesis of La Place, who stood second to none but Newton in the science of mathematical astronomy, teaches that the condensation of the originally gaseous chaos would assuredly emit light. Infidelity called Moses a blunderer and the Bible a fraud. Now science affirms that both were correct.

Science also throws light on the mysterious doctrine of the Trinity. This doctrine has been the subject of ridicule by infidels through the ages. Science is constantly multiplying analogies to the

doctrine through the whole realm of nature. We see that three primary colors enter into combination to produce white; these three colors are blue, yellow, and red. Think of me as I address you as a natural philosopher holding before your vision a broad disk of metal. Let us now paint on this disk these three colors in proper proportions, beginning with the circumference and ending with a point in the center. The painting has now been done; the segments of different colors are now distinctly visible. Closely watch this disk as it rapidly whirls on its axis. The disk now rapidly revolves. What has become of the three colors? They have entirely disappeared; the disk has become perfectly white. The philosopher has no satisfactory explanation to give. The three colors have blended into one color; three are one and one is three. We know that the red ray gives off heat, the yellow illumination, and the blue the life-giving qualities in the sun's ray. They are all needed as colors; they together form the beam of sunshine. No satisfactory explanation is given of this scientific demonstration. If three can be one and one three in science, why cannot three be one and one three in theology?

The fact is that a system of triads runs through the universe. In music the common chord or harmony is so named because it is formed of three radical sounds. Among the Egyptians there were remarkable theories as to the union of certain

attributes into triads; the third number of which proceeded from the other two. Similar suggestive combinations are found in chemistry. In the Hindu mythology we have three associated deities, as Brahma, Vishnu, and Siva; and in the Egyptian system we have Osiris, Isis, and Horus. Theophilus of Antioch was the first to introduce the term triad into Christian theology, and Tertullian the first to introduce the word trinity. In this respect these writers were in line with the teaching of the Rig Veda, and with Oriental theosophy of our day. We describe a solid dimension as that which has length, breadth, and thickness. We speak of ourselves as possessed of body, soul, and spirit; we are ourselves a trinity. If we cannot understand ourselves, how may we expect to understand God? The mystic union of the three persons in the Trinity was symbolized by the equilateral triangle, or by a combination of the triangle and the circle, and sometimes by the trefoil. The idea of the Trinity lies deep in the composition of the human soul. There is here the suggestion of a philosophy universal, profound, sublime, and divine.

#### THE MOTIVE SUGGESTED BY SCIENCE.

Science has rendered admirable service in giving emphasis to the motive which ought to dominate all investigations after truth. It must be admitted that at times the church has been most bitter and

bigoted. The church has feared science even when she was bearing her choicest gifts to the altar of religion. The profound doctrines of science have often been considered the vagaries of heresy. Popes and cardinals have thundered against the Galileos of science as if they were the emissaries of hades. Popes and cardinals are so thundering even at this hour; they are still hurling their bulls against the comets. Even many Protestant theologians have been violently prejudiced against scientific teaching. Many preachers have pronounced their anathemas on science, and the greater their ignorance of science, the warmer have been their denunciations. Even a few years ago many noble souls feared that geology and evolution would refute the Bible and destroy the church. A better spirit now prevails. Many scientists were largely to blame for the opposition of the religionists. Scientists were often bigoted, dogmatic, and intolerant; they evoked a similar spirit on the part of theologians. Both science and theology were often utterly wrong. The mistakes of Moses were usually the mistakes of the interpreters of Moses. The mistakes of the scientists were fully as great as those of the theologians. Medical practice of even a generation ago evokes derisive laughter on the part of medical men to-day. Both scientists and theologians ought to be modest; both are becoming modest. Science is humble and docile to-day compared with a



generation or even a decade ago. Science has inculcated a noble motive in the search for truth; theology is largely forgetting her former *odium theologicum*. She has learned much since the days of Augustine and Calvin. Extreme Calvinism is as injurious to true religion as the gross forms of atheism. Calvinistic teaching on election and predestination is largely responsible for modern infidelity.

Science in its spirit of self-denial manifests a noble motive in its search for truth and is thus helpful to religion. The earth is thus the handmaid to the woman. The spade of the archeologist is an evangel for truth and God. The services rendered for religion in the unearthing of the sculptures of Nineveh it would be difficult to overestimate. M. Botta's discoveries at Khorsabad and those of Mr. Layard at Nimroud are worthy of all praise. The self-sacrifice of these heroic investigators gives their names undying honor. The uncovering of buried treasures in Egypt has flashed light on the Bible and has given the explorers fame in all the halls of science. Undue praise can scarcely be given to the brave men who, at the cost of enormous toil, are exploring the royal quarries, Solomon's stables, the temple area, and subterranean Jerusalem as a whole. I uncover my head in the presence of men so self-sacrificing and truth-loving.

The noblest of all motives impelling men to

action is love of truth and of God. Many scientific men are lovers of truth; they press toward its attainment with a sublime enthusiasm. They have risen above narrow prejudice into the inspiring atmosphere generated by the search after truth. The time has come for theologians to take such scientists by the hand and march side by side to the music of Christ's name, remembering that he is King in truth's vast realm. Thus the earth and the woman will join hands and touch hearts in honoring Him whose name is above every name.

The day of such union between the earth and the woman, such harmony between science and religion, is dawning. Geology may wield her hammer and push her spade, and all her discoveries will but add glory to Genesis. Ethnology may push her inquiries all over the earth and her scientific conclusions will honor the record of creation by Moses and the speech of Paul at Athens. All the treasures of science and art belong to Jesus Christ. He is King over all the kingdoms of earth. All true sciences and theologies will cast their crowns at his feet and chant his praise as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, "Hallelujah to Jesus Christ, the author of salvation, the sublimest of sciences, Jesus Christ who liveth and reigneth forever."

## XX

### THE RAINBOWED THRONE

*Text : . . . And there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald.—Rev. 4 : 3.*

A PICTURE of well-nigh unparalleled sublimity is suggested by this text and its context. This fourth chapter begins the series of visions regarding future events which could not fail to bring hope and joy to the hearts of believers in that trying time, and which have brought cheer and inspiration to believers in all succeeding ages. We have here an undoubted assurance of the ultimate triumph of the gospel. The vision opens with a true manifestation of God. The exiled John in ecstatic vision is permitted to gaze into heaven. Heaven was really opened to him more than once while he was on the isle of Patmos. On this occasion an opening is made into heaven and he was permitted a view of the throne of God and of Him who sits upon that throne. He beheld the worshipers about that throne; he saw the lightnings play in awful splendor; he heard the thunder roar in majesty; he listened to the songs of the worshipers; and he beheld a rainbow of unique resplendence surrounding that august throne.

The appearance of Him who sat upon the throne is vaguely described, "to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone." There is here no attempt whatever to portray the form of the enthroned One; there is here no description which could suggest an image as an object of idolatrous worship. The description, however, is entirely appropriate as imaging a mighty monarch, but no one could undertake to paint or to chisel a figure so indefinitely described as "like a jasper and a sardine stone." The language, however, cannot fail to fill the mind with holy awe and lofty reverence. This vision was admirably adapted to lift the thoughts of the suffering John above the fear of prison and torture and above the murderous edicts of tyrants. It could not fail to inspire him with heroism, love, and faith, and with the hope of a blessed immortality. The vision here described bears a striking resemblance to those of Isaiah (chap. 6) and Ezekiel (chap. 1). As these prophets were about to enter upon the difficult duties of their exalted office, they had a vision of the Almighty, high and lifted up, before their astonished and delighted gaze. In like manner, the Apostle John was inducted into the office of making known future events by a similar vision. In his visions, as in those of Isaiah and Ezekiel, the most striking symbols are similar. In each case there is a glorious throne, and there are attending circumstances of majesty and sublimity; in each case an

exalted Personage sits on the throne; but in no case is there an attempt at an exact delineation of the divine Majesty. We behold him veiled in awful obscurity, thus making a powerful appeal to our imagination.

### THE POWERFUL THRONE

As we gaze through this door that was opened in heaven, we behold a wonderful throne. What are we to understand by this throne? Its various details will occupy our thought a little later; but, at the moment, we gaze upon the throne itself. This seems to be the first thing that arrested the attention of the ecstatic apostle; let us also look directly into heaven, and behold this throne surrounded by reverent worshipers. For what does this throne stand? To what great truth does it direct our thought? It is certainly the symbol of government in the universe; it preeminently suggests power. Power is a word difficult of definition; in the "Century Dictionary" more than three columns are given up to definitions and applications of this word. In its deepest meaning, power is an attribute of and an emanation from God. In Ps. 62: 11, we have the words, "power belongeth unto God." This scripture is a statement of the fundamental truth regarding the origin of power. The lofty throne on which we gaze, as we look upward through the open door into heaven, teaches more

than the mere fact of power; it suggests some of the characteristics of that power.

The first element of that power is its personality. We are gazing upon a throne which emphasizes personal power. He who sits on that throne is the divine Lord. He rules in heaven above and on earth beneath. In his hand is the scepter of universal sway. Behind all order is the divine Ordainer. Above all law is the divine Lawgiver. Law is not a force but a form, not a power but a process, not a motor but a motion. Behind all motion, behind every process and every form stands God. This is not a lawless world; this world is not ruled by impersonal force. Anarchy is not of God; it is the offspring of hades. When Proudhon said that "the true form of the State is anarchy," he doubtless meant by anarchy, not positive disorder, but simply the absence of any authoritative ruler, whether king or legislature. But in the world's vast domain God is the personal and supreme ruler. Just human laws are only copies of the eternal and divine laws which dominate the universe. Human law is often a very imperfect copy of the divine law, but it is at least, in so far as it is just, an attempt to copy the divine law. This world is a cosmos and not a chaos. The universe is an embodiment of harmony, notwithstanding the presence of sin and its consequences. In its deepest significance the world is a symphony; to the ear of God it is a divine oratorio.

There is great comfort in looking up at this glorious throne with its suggestions of personal and resistless power. The sight gives calmness to the mind and trustfulness to the heart. Rising in a balloon all the discordant sounds of earth finally blend into a harmonious psalm. In like manner, the vision of this throne suggests the unitive and harmonious dominance of God in a world of sin and sorrow. Amid all the trials and disappointments of earth, there is a sense of unbroken calmness and indescribable joyfulness as our gaze rests on this majestic throne.

Another characteristic of this power is its vastness. This throne represents a government great in power and wise in administration. Around the throne are four and twenty other thrones, and upon these thrones sit four and twenty elders arrayed in garments of white and wearing crowns of gold. This is a picture which profoundly stirs our emotions. The attendants of this personal throne are themselves royal. It is impossible to express in human language the lofty truths here set forth. Here are revelations of a government unspeakably glorious and amazingly powerful. Here resistless might and eternal love sweetly blend. As we listen to the thunderings and the voices holy awe fills our souls and responsive love moves our hearts.

He is greatly insane who denies or defies the laws of physical gravitation. Not less insane is

he who attempts to oppose the laws of moral gravitation. These laws sweep through the universe of God; they are universal and eternal as God. To master law, we must obey law; to disobey law is to be destroyed by law. We smile at Margaret Fuller, when in her transcendental philosophy, she said that she accepted the universe. This acceptance was remarkable condescension on her part. We recognize her great brilliancy and the value of much of her work. But, suppose that she had not accepted the universe; suppose she had openly denied and opposed the universe, what would the poor universe have done then? Would it entirely have gone out of business? Would not Margaret Fuller have been much more likely to go out of business than the universe? Let us, as wise men and women, accept God, his laws, his government, his love. He only is wise who capitulates to God. Bowing in trustful love before God's throne, we rise to the highest attainable point of human greatness. Denying or opposing God, we become, in the sight of saints and seraphs, culpable and pitiable fools. Trusting, loving, and obeying God, we win earth's sublimest victory and enjoy the loftiest bliss of which the human soul is capable.

This throne also represents an intelligent power. Our thought is carried forward to the fact that before the throne was a sea of glass like unto crystal; there were also four living creatures full of eyes before and behind. It is not possible to go



at length into the discussion of all the lessons taught by these varied symbols. The sea of glass suggests the clear ether in which the throne of God is upborne; the fact that this sea was in front of the throne betokened the insulation of that throne from all the beings by whom it was surrounded. The material of this sea indicates the ethereal purity and sublime repose of that throne. It is observable that the living creatures have eyes; they are intelligent observers. Here is the majestic lion; here the noble ox, one of the most useful of domestic animals; here the soaring eagle, the king of the air; and here is man, the monarch of all creation. The union of ideas suggested by these living creatures is most instructive. Men have asked, "How doth God know?" Here is the answer to that question; the attendants of God's throne are full of eyes; the pavement around God's throne is glass, clear as crystal. God sees. God knows. God loves. No blind and blundering government is his; but infinite wisdom, infinite power, and infinite love direct the thought, move the arm, and control the heart of Him who sits in sublime majesty on this celestial throne.

#### THE PROMISEFUL THRONE.

Let us glance once more upward through the door graciously opened in heaven. Let us strive to be like the holy seer in the Spirit as we gaze upward. What do we now behold in addition to

the throne? We have already glanced at the throne and at the divine Personage seated thereon. We have seen that this celestial One was like jasper and a sardine stone. The jasper stone was of various wavy colors, and in ancient times was used for gems and ornaments; now it is used for tables and even for pavements. The altar in Canterbury Cathedral, as Dean Alford reminds us, stands on a platform of yellow jasper pavement, thirty feet by fourteen feet. The sardine stone is generally supposed to answer to our carnelian. Some make the jasper correspond to our diamond, and so they would find in the two stones a suggestion of the divinity and humanity of the Occupant of this throne.

But as we are gazing upward, our thought is fixed upon an object of marvelous beauty and of profound instruction, "a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." This rainbow gratifies our æsthetic nature, and it edifies our minds and hearts. It carries us back to Gen. 9: 13, where we read, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth." As the throne suggested power, so the rainbow suggests promise. The rainbow is intrinsically beautiful and is religiously promissive. It is the arc of a circle consisting of the prismatic colors formed by the refraction and reflection of rays of light from drops of rain, appearing in the part of the heavens

opposite to the sun. As the rainbow spans the heavens, so it spans the Bible; one end of it, if we may so speak, rests on Genesis and the other on Revelation. It gives us then an ancient promise. God, by means of the rainbow, speaks in a language that is understood by men of all creeds and countries. That this bow is green, rather than prismatic, does not change its significance. Its form is that of the covenant bow. It attracts every eye and charms every poetic instinct. This image is both emblematical and beautiful. It is the emblem of peace appearing on the cloud when the storm has passed away. God is the great painter; the heavens are his sublime picture gallery. We travel far to see the masterpieces of Raphael, Velasquez, Murillo, and other artists almost divine in their genius; and we do well. But we do ill to pass lightly over God's masterpieces which he hangs in the heavens. In rising and setting sun, in cloud and star, in storm and calm, God's matchless pictures may well arrest our thought, delight our soul, and evoke our adoration. God is to be worshiped as a God of beauty as well as of love and holiness. This vision of the rainbow teaches us that the promise made in Noah's bow is beautifully repeated in the bow of John's vision. We may well thank God for this ancient promise.

But it is also a universal promise. The rainbow speaks a language which all men in all centuries and countries can understand. The rainbow is a

striking illustration of the words of the psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God." God has written his law on the fleshy tablets of men's hearts. The heathen evermore were feeling after God. All the light which came to Socrates, to Plato, and to Aristotle came from God. Jesus Christ was the true light that lighteth every man, so far as he has any light whatever. Heathen mythologies were often unconscious prophecies of spiritual truths. The heathen gave us in various forms the story of Iris. In Hesiod, Iris is the daughter of Thaumas and Electra—daughter of Wonder and Brightness. In the Homeric poems, she is the virgin messenger of the gods. In Greek her name means rainbow; and Virgil represents the bow as the path of the goddess. The Greeks always represented the rainbow as a divine portent, as really a divine voice proclaiming great truths to men. Thus they saw in the rainbow a divine meaning, a universal promise, and a celestial revelation. It is not a little remarkable that in Homer's "Iliad" we have a reference to the "rainbow which Jove fixed in the cloud as a sign to men of many languages."

My beloved friend, the late Dr. Charles S. Robinson, in discussing this subject, reminds us that the Hindus called the rainbow "the weapon of Indra." The Germans named it *Bifrost*, or "the living way"; and the Samoieds—nomadic tribes on the shores of the Arctic Ocean—call the rainbow

“the border of the supreme God’s robe.” A German commentator has called the rainbow “the eye of Jehovah.” Thus everywhere the rainbow is recognized as the sign of a divine covenant. The rainbow gives a universal promise in a universal language. It suggests in a universal language the story of God as Creator, Preserver, Friend, and Saviour.

This is also a perpetual promise. We are distinctly informed that the rainbow was in sight like unto an emerald; thus only one of the seven colors in the spectrum is represented. It is worthy of remark that in the Orient green is the emblem of unchangeableness; it is the color which signifies enduring and incorruptible fidelity. The Hindus portrayed the chariot of the sun as drawn by green horses. In some Oriental courts green is the color of the turbans and robes, as Doctor Robinson affirms, which are worn by sovereigns. To this color the Mohammedans attached such religious sacredness, that only the lineal descendants of the prophet are permitted to wear it. This color is thus honored by the faithful followers of Islam in all lands. Our God is a covenant-keeping God; he is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. This sublime truth the emerald rainbow affirms.

It is also a personal promise. No two persons see exactly the same rainbow. The sun’s rays, striking on the shower-drops, are so refracted and reflected that the colors are separated. Each

person sees his own rainbow; each person is the owner of a rainbow; each man needs a whole promise from God. God's covenant is all yours; at the same time it is all mine. The natural sun belongs, in its entirety, alike to the lofty oak and to the lowly flower. Each man has all the sun, as if he were the only man in the world. Each man needs all of God; each man may have all of God. The Sun of Righteousness, like the natural sun, has beams enough for us all. Rejoice with all the heart and soul in the personal promise of God implied in the rainbow—a promise which may span our lives as the rainbow spans the Bible and the physical universe.

#### THE PURPOSEFUL THRONE.

We have already seen that this august throne stands for power and promise; we are now to discover the exalted purpose of this throne. This thought is beautifully suggested by the relation between the throne and the rainbow. The teaching of the throne and the lesson of the rainbow are modified, harmonized, and unified by the relation between the throne and the rainbow. This relation is instructive in the extreme. The throne stands for regal power; the rainbow is the symbol of divine promise. We are now prepared to observe that the throne does not embrace the rainbow, but that the rainbow surrounds the throne. This relation is not accidental; it is

sweetly providential. There is a divine purpose between throne and rainbow.

Let us discover, if we can, this purpose. The first truth taught is that God's promise surrounds God's power. This is one of the sweetest truths which the Bible could utter. God's resistless power will be employed to fulfil God's eternal promise. Mere power on the part of God could scarcely evoke love on the part of man; but power as the servant of loving promises becomes divinely beneficent. Power is one of the mysteries of God's character and revelation. It is well expressed in art by the luminous nebula which was supposed to emanate from the divine essence. Thus the heathen decorated their deities with a crown of rays. In the text, the symbol of God's power is surrounded by the symbol of God's promise. Promise and power are thus beautifully conjoined for the comfort of even the feeblest saint.

The relation between the rainbow and the throne suggests that mercy surrounds justice. Daniel Webster affirmed that justice is the ligament which holds civilized nations together. We know that its absence would destroy all desirable forms of human society. A sense of justice is inherent in all types of humanity. It speaks in all languages, and is translated into some form of action even by the rudest of nations. There is no contradiction between God's justice and God's mercy. Mercy in human law often sets aside the

majesty of the law itself. If never exercised, law may become a form of tyranny. If constantly exercised, law will become an object of contempt. Law without penalty is not law, but only advice. In the justice of God mercy and truth meet together. On the cross righteousness and peace kissed each other. Thank God, mercy now surrounds the throne of justice and both are beautifully harmonized in all God's promises and purposes.

We advance still another step, and observe that love surrounds providence. This thought is unspeakably tender and comforting. God is not simply loving; but God is love. Love is the very heart and soul of God. Love is the soul of all true religion. Love is the sweet incense which must perfume all our services, if they are to be acceptable to God. Love is the grace which God longs to discover in the hearts and lives of his children. Love is the inspiration to all noble service for God and man.

Through this door opened in heaven we have gazed upward to this sublime throne. We cannot forever gaze through this opened door, but we shall carry away with us on the tablets of our hearts the ineffaceable picture of that celestial throne surrounded by its emerald rainbow; and the lessons of throne and rainbow thus related will comfort our hearts and inspire our future years. Loving and serving God we shall one day



see Christ high and lifted up on this glorious throne; and our songs of praise, beautiful even as the rainbow itself, shall surround that throne, as we chant the praise of Him who has made us kings and priests unto God; and unto him shall be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

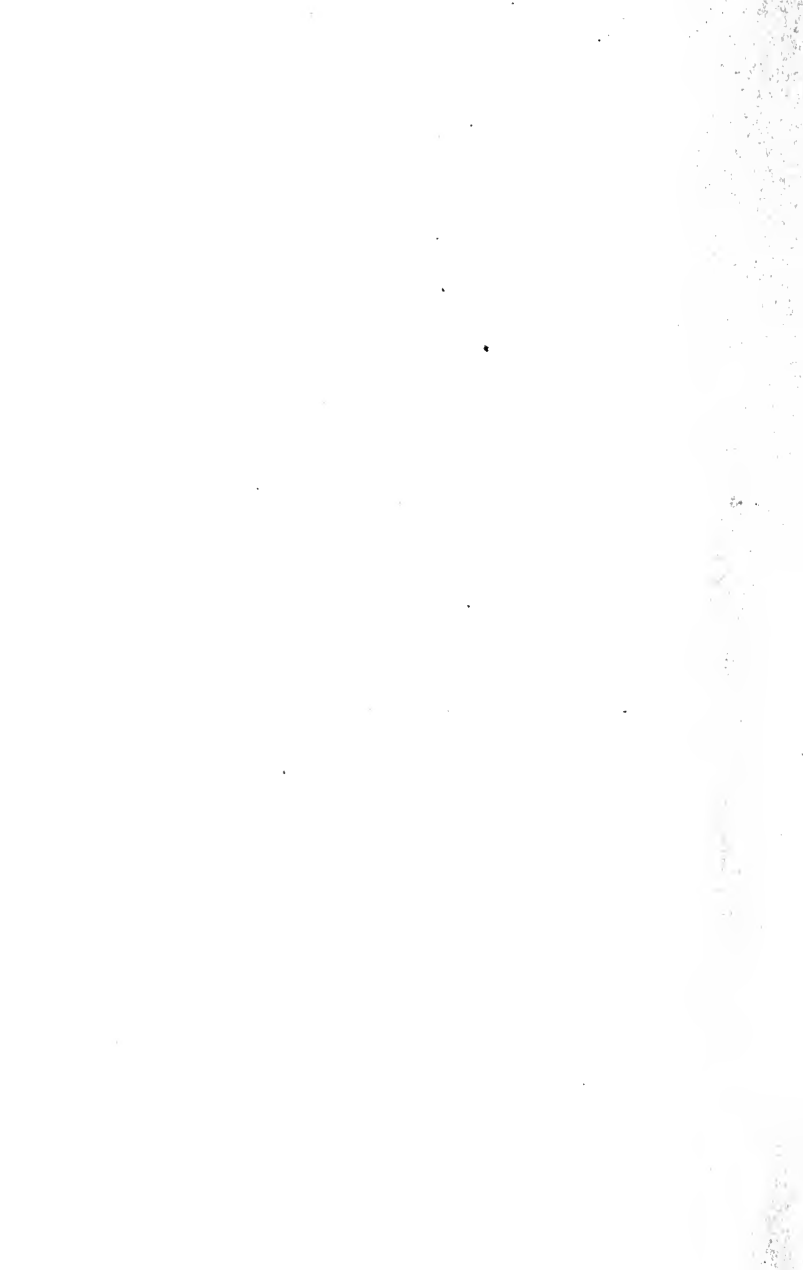












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